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REMARKABLE ESCAPES

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# REMARKABLE ESCAPES FROM PERIL.

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## INTRODUCTION.

THERE are two facts connected with man's existence here which it is of the utmost importance that he should remember, but which he is strangely prone to forget.

The first is the extreme uncertainty of life, and his constant liability to death. In words at least men admit this truth : all know that life's thread is so brittle that it may snap at any moment ; that the next breath we draw we may inhale deadly infection—that the next step we take may be into the grave. The pulse which beats as the author traces these lines may never beat again ; the eye that reads them may be closed in death ere the page shall be turned. All this we acknowledge to be true : but how few really *believe* and act upon it ! We confess the truth in words—we deny it in conduct and feeling ; we feel its force in the case

of others, but we are insensible to it in our own. Men wonder that the soldier, the sailor, the miner, should so often lead careless lives, surrounded as they are by danger and death, forgetting the while that they live amidst perils, latent indeed, but no less real than theirs: "All men think all men mortal but themselves." We marvel at the insensibility of others, and are ourselves as insensible as they. "Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

The other fact to which men are prone to be so strangely insensible, is their constant and entire dependence on the providential care of God, to guard them amidst manifold and impending dangers, to preserve them in their exceeding frailty, and to sustain their lives till the "appointed time" for their departure shall have come. Around and "underneath us are the everlasting arms;" but because we feel no sensible pressure, we forget their sustaining might. He "in whom we live and move and have our being is not far from any one of us,"

yet how apt are we to forget his presence and our dependence, because he does not make it manifest by any tangible or visible token! The very constancy and ceaselessness of his care tend to confirm our insensibility to it. The equable, unvarying flow of Divine goodness, preserving our lives from sudden jars and shocks, often makes us unmindful of its existence. The broad deep river, moving noiselessly and majestically in its ample channel, seems, to a thoughtless passer-by, to be almost motionless, as compared with the shallow brook which dashes itself into foam against the rocks which obstruct its course and block up its bed. Just so in our lives, the very fact that God has removed out of our way the hindrances to a safe and easy course, often makes us forget that Divine care has been exercised at all. We need imminent and startling perils to remind us of our ceaseless and signal deliverances. Cecil, returning home one day, was met by his son, who said, "Father, I have had a merciful escape since we parted; my horse fell under me, yet I was preserved unhurt." "My son," replied he, "I have had a yet more wonderful escape; I have ridden five hundred miles, and my horse has not so much as stumbled."

There is, however, an important difference as respects the mode in which the facts thus noted are treated by mankind. No one questions the certainty of death: "The living know that they must die." God's providential care for us and control over the events of our history, is, however, regarded by many with doubt, and, by some, is met with a flat denial. There are various degrees of scepticism on this point, from the atheist—"the fool who says in his heart, There is no God;"—the epicurean, who would place him at an unapproachable distance from his creatures, whence he cannot "humble himself to behold the things that are done upon the earth;"—the modern philosopher, who affirms that the Deity works by necessary, universal, and invariable laws, which will not bend and adapt themselves to special individual cases, admitting a general, but denying a particular providence;—down to the hesitating believer, whose feeble, languid faith is unable to grasp firmly the cheering truth that the very hairs of his head are numbered, and that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without the will of his Father who is in heaven.

In the following pages it is intended to adduce some instances of remarkable escapes from



peril, which may tend to give a more vivid and distinct appreciation of our constant dependence on the providence of God. Many of our readers probably will be able to recall from their own experience events similar to those recorded in our work, and it will be no small benefit if they are led by the perusal of this volume gratefully to recognise or recollect those manifest tokens of "the good hand of God" upon them. Some, whose lives have flowed on so equably and smoothly that they have no dangers or deliverances to remember, may learn from the experience of others, as here detailed, that should the moment of peril ever arise, God is able to deliver them in their utmost and extremest need.

With regard to the incidents narrated in this volume, the writer may be permitted to say that his chief difficulty has been that of selection; and that he was not prepared for the immense number of illustrative facts that crowded upon him on every hand so soon as his attention was called to the subject. In selecting the incidents for narration, only those have been adopted which seemed to be well-authenticated and attested. Very many have been rejected because the evidence in their

favour was incomplete. In the great majority of instances, also, the words of the original narrative have been given with some abridgment, and condensation where the particulars were unimportant. Though this plan may occasion an inequality and even a frequent ruggedness of style, yet it has the preponderating advantage of conveying the exact truth, while it frees the writer from the suspicion of having coloured his statements to suit his purpose.

Before entering, however, upon the main subject of the volume, a few preliminary difficulties which may exist in the minds of some readers may be briefly dealt with.

These difficulties are of two kinds, or at least may be reduced to one of two classes which are diametrically opposed to each other.

The first of these would ascribe escapes from danger to chance or accident, and would resolve all deliverances from peril into mere casual and fortuitous coincidences. Now, if we attend to the meaning of the terms we use, it will become most evident that chance is a mere word and nothing more. It simply expresses our ignorance of the causes which have been at work to produce a given result, or else that the event was unexpected by us, and took us

by surprise. To speak of chance as a producing cause, or agent, is pure absurdity, and only affords an instance of the often noted fact, that we are constantly imposed upon and deceived by the words we use. It is neither more nor less than making our ignorance the controlling or producing cause of the events which happen. In the strict sense of the words, there can be no such thing as chance in the universe, since everything must spring from some cause, and come into existence according to some law, hidden from us, perhaps, yet not the less real and efficacious. Whilst reason and experience thus confute the idea of chance as an agency in the affairs of men, religion points us to God as the hidden cause, and his will as the secret law.

But difficulties in the way of providential interposition of the very opposite character are felt by some minds. It is maintained that the affairs of the world are regulated by hard, inflexible, material laws, which cause and control all events, and which do not and cannot bend to meet any emergency; that man has been provided with faculties which fit him to investigate these laws, and with prudence and foresight which enable him to apply his knowledge

of them to practice ; that if in the exercise of this practical wisdom he acts in accordance with these laws, he will escape all disasters and perils ; but that if he neglect or violate them, they will work on with crushing and resistless force for his destruction. If this be so, there is no room for providential interposition, no answers to prayer, nothing but the execution of natural and inevitable laws. These views have been enforced with much show of logical argumentation and philosophical profundity, in some of the popular treatises of the day. It would be an easy task to expose their fallacies and sophisms in detail ; to do so, however, would occupy far more space than our pages can afford. It will be sufficient to point out the three following insuperable difficulties by which such a theory is beset.

1st. The word of God distinctly, emphatically, and repeatedly asserts the fact of a special providence, and declares that God does continue to watch over and care for the creatures he has formed. Whilst it condemns the presumptuous neglect of means, it teaches us that second causes are but instruments in the hands of God, and that the laws of nature are but the manifestations of his Divine will. It adduces

numberless instances in which his servants, who have been brought into circumstances of danger, have been delivered by his special and direct intervention, sometimes by the temporary suspension of natural laws, sometimes by the interposition of other secondary causes and instrumentalities, yet always by the agency of Him for whose power nothing is too vast, nothing too minute. These theorists, then, who deny the fact of a special providence, must be prepared to prove the Scriptures a cunningly devised fable—must confute and overthrow the overwhelming amount of evidence which attests their Divine origin, before they can prove the truth of their speculations.

2nd. The universal instincts of mankind testify to the reality of Divine providence. The belief of some supreme Being presiding over the affairs of men, hearing their prayers, supplying their wants, and guarding their lives, has been universal. The most polished and refined nations have not risen above this conviction—the most barbarous and degraded have not sunk below it. For three thousand years atheism in its various forms has endeavoured to uproot it, but in vain. Beyond the narrow limits of a superficial school, this cold and

cheerless negation has been unable to propagate itself ; and men have clung with firm tenacity to the belief that "there is a God that judgeth in the earth." Even the scoffers at providence have commonly been heard to pray when in sorrow or danger. The laws of nature are felt to be too numerous, intricate, and vast for our feeble powers to explore and grasp ; man sinks down appalled at the mighty, mysterious forces at work all around him, and he flies by a necessity of his being to some supreme Power who cares for his frail erring creatures. In all ages and nations men have endeavoured to avert calamity and to secure prosperity by prayer. The universality of this tendency points to some fundamental law of our moral being, equally universal with itself. But this is a fact which needs to be accounted for. Whence sprang this universal conviction ? How can its existence be explained, save on the supposition of the reality of the fact which it asserts ?

3rd. Experience establishes the doctrine of Divine providence on the sure, solid foundation of fact. There are innumerable events and conjunctures in the history of the world which the supposition of blind chance or of blind law

are powerless to explain; in which we are compelled to admit the action of some overruling and designing agency, controlling and directing the affairs of men. This is peculiarly observable in tracing back to their first small beginnings the great movements which have affected the destinies of humanity, or in studying the biography of those individuals who have originated or guided those movements. We discern that circumstances altogether beyond their control, and of the design and influence of which they were not aware, have turned them from one course or impelled them into another, checked them, directed them, and "led them by a way that they knew not." A careful examination of these seeming accidents will discover in them such minute and exact adaptations, such evident tokens of design, and results so unexpected, yet so momentous, that every candid mind must admit that there was in them something more than the action of accident or of law, and will confess with the Egyptian magicians, "This is the finger of God."

Let us look, for instance, at the career of Luther. Among the many incidents in his eventful life which illustrate this truth, we will

only advert to that decisive one which led him to abandon a secular life and enter a monastery. He is returning from Mansfeld ; the death of Alexis has greatly affected him, and made him feel the vanity of life and the nearness of death more than he has ever done before. Erfurth is near, when he will again have to plunge into studies and pursuits for which these thoughts have given him a distaste. A thunderbolt bursts from the sky, flashes by him, and buries itself in the earth at his feet. His decision is at once taken. He asks himself what his condition would have been if that bolt had struck him. He shudders at the thought, and thenceforward determines to devote himself to a life of religion and to a preparation for eternity. How different would the history of the world have been had the life of Luther ended there, or if it had not been turned into a new channel ! Had his course been different, ours must have been so too. Yet on how many contingencies and chances did it seem to depend ! That he should have got just to that spot and no farther ; that the bolt should have fallen just where and when it did, and not struck him ; that it should have descended just at the moment when his mind was opened to receive



such lessons and influences ;—all these things suppose an overruling Providence, controlling his footsteps, acquainted with his thoughts, launching the thunder-bolt and directing its flight; thus preparing for the Reformation, and shielding the head of the great, but as yet unconscious reformer, from harm.

Or take the case of Pascal.—Just at the time when his hopeless passion for the sister of his friend and patron, the duke of Roannes, had inspired him with an aversion to the world, he was driving over the bridge of Neuilly, when, as he came to that part of it which was unprotected by a parapet, his horses took fright, began to plunge violently, and sprang over the side of the bridge into the river. Had the carriage followed them, Pascal must have perished; but, happily, on the brink of the descent the traces broke, the horses were drowned, and he escaped. He now yielded to the entreaties of his sister Jacqueline, who was already an inmate of the celebrated Port Royal Academy, and devoted himself to the service of God. To this circumstance we owe the Provincial Letters, which were the first, and are still among the heaviest blows ever struck at the system of the Jesuit; and his “Thoughts,” which take

their place among the most precious gems in the treasury of the church.

In further illustration of the truth which we have thus been endeavouring to establish, let us take another instance of a different kind, in which the chain of providential antecedents and sequences is much longer and more complicated. In the year 1500, the wife of Giovanni Cellini gave birth to a child. The parents had been led by various superstitious reasons to expect a daughter, whom they designed to name *Reparata*. It proved to be a boy. "The nurse," says Cellini, in his autobiography, "took it to my father, observing, 'I here bring you a fine present which you little expect.' My father, who was of a philosophical disposition, said, 'What God gives me I shall always receive thankfully;' and turning aside the clothes in which I was wrapped, saw with his own eyes the unexpected boy. Clasping his hands together, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, saying, 'Lord, I thank thee from the very bottom of my heart for this present, which is very dear and welcome to me.' The standers-by asked him joyfully how he proposed to call the child now? He made them no other answer than, 'He is *Welcome*.' And this name of *Welcome*

Benvenuto) he resolved to give me at the font ; and so I was christened accordingly."

Cellini goes on to narrate that when he was three years old, as he was playing in the yard behind his father's house, a large scorpion fell out from behind a water-tank. Taking it for a crab, he seized it, but from its size and the manner in which he grasped it, its two mouths protruded beyond his little hand on one side, and its tail on the other. Running with it to his grandfather, he cried, " See my pretty little crab ! " The old man called loudly to him to throw it down, at which he began to cry, and grasped it the harder. The father, attracted by the altercation, ran up, and perceiving that if the child attempted to do so, he would be fatally wounded before he could disentangle himself from its claws, seized a pair of shears which lay near, and cut off its head and tail. His life was thus preserved, and as he grew up he was distinguished not only for great talent as an artist, but as one of the most daring swordsmen and best marksmen in Rome.

In the twenty-sixth year of his age, the famous siege of Rome by the troops under the constable De Bourbon occurred. Early on the morning of the day on which the assault on the city was

to be made, the constable was killed by a shot from the walls. The immediate and the ulterior results of his death were most important. Before the close of the day Rome would have been his—held for him by an army of forty thousand men, devoted to his person, and for the most part enlisted from the Protestant states of Germany. His civil and military genius, which made him formidable even as a solitary exile, would have enabled him to keep what he had acquired, or at the least he would have been in a position to dictate terms to his enemies in France, and secure the restoration of his title and estates. In either case, the destinies of France, Spain, and Italy would have been materially affected. There can be but little question but that he would have joined his kinsmen and party, who put themselves at the head of the Huguenot movement. With the accession of his genius, influence, and wealth, the issue of the bloody conflict must have been widely different. Even as it was, the Huguenots were all but a match for their enemies, and were only crushed by one of the most atrocious crimes recorded on the page of history. Had he lived then, and thrown his weight into their scale, the massacre of St. Bartholomew and the

revocation of the Edict of Nantes would in all likelihood have been averted. But historians are agreed that these atrocities were among the causes of the French revolution, by the murder and exile of the Protestants who formed the best part of the French population. The same causes co-operated in securing to England her manufacturing and commercial supremacy, by driving to her hospitable shores the fugitives, with their various arts and industry, which France then lost, and we gained. It is vain, however, to speculate upon what might have been. It is sufficient to say, that the struggle between the Roman Catholics and Protestants was the turning-point in the history of France, and that, nearly balanced as the parties were, the life of the constable De Bourbon must have greatly influenced the issue.

But what, it may be asked, has this to do with the young artist Cellini? Everything; for he declares that it was he who fired the fatal shot. If we accept his statement as a true one, what important events in the world's history hung upon that moment when as a child he grasped the scorpion! Had he seized it by another part of the body, or had the reptile's sting been a few hair-breadths longer,

its poison would probably have been fatal to him, and the whole course of European history must have been altered. It is true that if we look, as Protestants, at the disastrous consequences to the reformed faith in France, which in all probability flowed from the death of the constable De Bourbon, we may at first sight be apt to think that it would have been better for the world that the scorpion's bite had been fatal to the child. But, doubtless, such a conclusion would be a short-sighted one. Important results, in addition to those already developed, may yet spring from it. In our ignorance of the tendencies of the present and the revelations of the future, we must wait the unfolding of His purposes "whose glory it is to conceal a thing."

These incidents may surely prove that what reason and revelation teach as to the agency of Divine Providence, is yet further confirmed by an appeal to fact. Events which seem most trivial are made to work out the most momentous results, and what men blinded by unbelief term accidental chances, are the workings of that Providence "that shapes our ends rough hew them how we may." The following pages will tend still more fully, we trust, to illustrate this truth.

## CHAPTER I.

SIGNAL DELIVERANCES FROM IMMINENT PERILS OF MEN  
WHO EVENTUALLY BECAME EMINENT FOR PIETY AND  
FOR USEFULNESS.

It is related of the Waldenses, that on one occasion when, escaping from the fury of their cruel persecutors, they had to continue their flight through the night, their path lay through the rugged and perilous defiles of the Alps. But the dangers amidst which they moved were veiled by the impenetrable darkness. At length the day broke, and under the light of the rising sun, they turned to survey the track along which they had trod. By a unanimous and irresistible impulse, they fell on their knees to thank God for their marvellous preservation from dangers which the darkness had at once concealed and increased ; here, they had walked on the very verge of a tremendous precipice, where a false step would have dashed them to atoms ; there, they had skirted the banks of a

mountain lake, whose black waters seemed to indicate unfathomable depths ; and yonder hung the avalanche, with a balance so tremulous that a whisper might have brought it down, and buried them beneath its mountainous mass. This night-march of God's persecuted children affords an apt illustration of the experience of many of his servants. They have moved on reckless of the perils which surrounded, and unmindful of the arm which sustained them : till at length they " who were sometime darkness, but are now light in the Lord," look back upon the path they have trod, and fall prostrate in wonder, gratitude, and adoring praise, at a review of the dangers they have escaped, and the unacknowledged deliverances they have enjoyed.

In the present chapter it will be our endeavour to collect a few examples of this kind. May the reader, as he peruses them, and traces, perhaps, in his own life, events of a similar character, be led to inquire whether they have produced in his mind similar impressions and results—gratitude to God for his forbearing mercy, repentance for sin, and surrender of the heart to Christ and to the Spirit, so that henceforth he may be safe, either in life or death.



The early life of Bunyan affords a striking illustration of the truth, to the exposition of which this chapter is devoted. We give the narrative in his own simple language:—

“God did not leave me, but followed me still, not now with convictions but with judgments, yet such as were mixed with mercies. For once I fell into a creek of the sea, and hardly escaped drowning. Another time I fell out of a boat into the Bedford river, but mercy yet preserved me alive. Besides, another time, being in the field with one of my companions, it chanced that an adder passed over the highway; so I, having a stick in my hand, struck her over the back; and having stunned her, I forced open her mouth with my stick, and plucked her sting out with my fingers; by which act, had not God been merciful unto me, I might by my desperateness have brought myself to mine end.

“This, also, have I taken notice of with thanksgiving:—When I was a soldier, I, with others, was drawn out to go to such a place to besiege it; but when I was just ready to go, one of the company desired to go in my room; to which, when I had consented, he took my place; and coming into the siege, as he stood

sentinel, he was shot in the head with a musket ball and died.\*

“ Here, as I said, were judgments and mercy, but neither of them did awaken my soul to righteousness ; wherefore I sinned still, and grew more and more rebellious against God, and careless of my own salvation.”

Had Bunyan been cut off in his sins, as on each of these occasions he was on the very point of being, what an irreparable loss would have been sustained by the world and the church ! Well might he, in recollecting such escapes as these, speak of “ Grace abounding to the chief of sinners ;” and take as the motto to that well-known work the words, “ Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.” What fitter subject for profane mirth could be found than the Divine Omnipotence stooping to care for the poor illiterate tinker ; yet how is the fact justified and explained by the result !

The life of the rev. J. Newton has some striking points of resemblance with that of Bunyan, in the vices and perils of his earlier, and the signal usefulness of his closing days.

\* This happened at the siege of Leicester ; the spot is still traditionally pointed out.

He records *six* distinct escapes from the most imminent danger. In his youth he agreed to accompany some companions who were going on board a man-of-war on the sabbath. On his way to join them he was detained by some unexpected circumstance, and when he reached the spot, they had sailed; but they never returned—the boat sank, and all perished. Some years afterwards, when off the African coast, he challenged his mess-mates to a drinking bout. In the course of it he proposed as a toast, a horrible imprecation against the man who should leave the table first. This proved to be himself. His brain fired with the spirits he had drunk, he was dancing about the deck like a maniac, when his hat flew overboard. He was just springing over the ship's side after it, when one of his comrades caught him. Had he plunged into the sea, he must have perished, as, even when sober, he could not swim; the tide also was running very strong, and his companions were too much intoxicated to have got out a boat for his rescue.

One night a violent storm broke upon the vessel in which he was, and the alarm was given that she had struck. He was hastening on deck, when the captain met him, and bade

him return below for a knife, appointing another man to take his place during his absence. His substitute was washed overboard almost immediately. On two other occasions, during this voyage, did the same watchful Providence preserve him from the most imminent perils. On his next voyage to the same coast, he had been engaged for some days in fetching wood and water from the shore. As he was pushing off one afternoon, the captain hailed him and told him to return, saying, that "he had taken it into his head that Newton should remain on board that day, and some one go ashore in his place." The captain could give no other reason for the change, than that such was his will. Newton of course obeyed. The boat was swamped, and the sailors who went in her were drowned.

Some years afterwards, Newton had arranged to go on board a ship at a given hour. As he was remarkable for his punctuality, often sitting with his watch in his hand, lest he should be a minute behind time, his friends were much surprised at being kept waiting for him on this occasion. At length he arrived, having been detained by an unexpected and pressing engagement. Whilst on their way to the vessel,

she blew up with a fearful explosion. Had he been (according to his previously invariable practice) punctual to his appointment, he must have perished with all on board. The detention of a few minutes, reluctantly submitted to, prolonged a life of unspeakable value to the church of Christ.

The late Mr. James Haldane, so well known from his efforts to revive evangelical religion in Scotland, at the commencement of the present century, was, like Mr. Newton, originally trained to the sea as his profession. He was throughout his life distinguished by that energy, courage, and stern devotion to duty, which form the basis of the noblest characters, and which only need the renewing and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, to prepare for the greatest achievements in the Christian warfare. Though preserved from running "to the same excess of riot" into which Newton, in common with so many seamen, plunged, he yet attained the age of manhood before his great natural endowments were laid at the foot of the cross, and consecrated, in simple faith, to the Saviour. It was whilst he was living without God, that he experienced the following providential deliverance.

“ The ship in which he sailed,” says his biographer, “ was crowded with passengers ; amongst whom was a cavalry officer, who was returning home—a notorious shot, a successful duellist, and much of a bully. It afterwards appeared that he had been forced to leave the king’s service in consequence of his quarrelsome temper and aptitude for such brawls. In the course of the voyage he made himself very disagreeable, and was a general object of dread. On one occasion, some high words arose between him and Mr. Haldane, arising out of a proposal to make the latter a party to a paltry trick, designed to provoke an irritable invalid, as he lay in his cot with his door open, and was, in fact, actually dying. Mr. Haldane’s indignant refusal issued in this captain’s taking an opportunity, deliberately and publicly, to insult him at the mess-table, when, in return for a somewhat contemptuous retort, the aggressor threw a glass of wine in Mr. Haldane’s face. To rise from his seat and dash at the head of his assailant a heavy ship’s tumbler, was the work of an instant. Providentially the missile was pitched too high,\* pulverized

\* The reader will probably remember a parallel incident in the life of Henry Martyn, who, like Mr. Haldane, narrowly

against the beam of the cabin, and descended in a shower of liquid upon the offending dragoon. A challenge and a duel ensued. The two antagonists were placed at twelve paces distant, and were to fire together and by signal. Before the pistol was given into Mr. Haldane's hand, his second, in a low tone, repeated what he had said before, that this was a case in which he must have no scruple about shooting his opponent; that it was not a common duel, but a case of self-preservation, and that one or the other must fall. The signal was given, and as Mr. Haldane raised the pistol, with a strange inconsistency he breathed the secret prayer—'Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit;' thus verifying the observation of Tertullian, that in moments of danger men involuntarily call upon God, even when they seem practically to forget his existence, and trample upon his laws. With this prayer in his heart, and with his eye fixed on his antagonist, without a symptom of trepidation, he calmly drew the trigger, when his pistol burst, the contents flying upwards, and fragments of the barrel striking and

escaped being a murderer; having, in a fit of passion, hurled a carving-knife at the head of a person who had offended him.

wounding his face. The other pistol missed fire, and the challenger immediately intimated that he was so well satisfied with the honourable conduct of Mr. Haldane that he was willing that the affair should terminate. Thus was he preserved from a double danger, either of which threatened to be almost certainly fatal—the deadly aim of his antagonist, and the bursting of his own pistol.

“In pleasing contrast to the spirit manifested in this affair, was Mr. Haldane’s conduct about ten years afterward, his conversion having occurred in the interval. Being at Buxton, in the public room of one of the large hotels, he was treated with marked insolence and rudeness by a young man present. Mr. Haldane calmly said, ‘There was a time, sir, when I should have resented this impertinence, but I have since learned to forgive injuries, and to overlook insults.’ He had lived to exemplify Solomon’s words, ‘Better is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.’

“Mr. Haldane found in his brother Robert an able and energetic partner in his pious enterprises. The earnest and successful labours of the latter in Scotland and at Geneva are too well known to need description here. He was



providentially preserved, as his brother had been, at a time when, like him, he was unmindful of God's tender care. When skating one day, the ice broke; he fell in, and was, with the utmost difficulty, extricated. This event, seconded by his brother's influence, seems to have been one of the links in the chain of second causes which led to his dedication to God of the life thus preserved."

We have referred, in our introduction, to the mode in which Luther and Pascal's deliverance operated upon them, at a time when they had just begun to be awakened to the realities of eternal things. The same truth is ably illustrated in a work recently published, entitled "A Testimony to the Truth," which contains the account of several remarkable deliverances which the writer of it experienced in Australia, at a time when he was emerging from the dark and dreary blank of atheism, into a life of faith in Christ. We select the narrative of one of the escapes which happened to its author, just as speculative infidelity was on the point of giving way, because it illustrates the coincidence which so often is found to occur between escape from peril and a peculiar state of mind, existing at the moment of deliverance in the person rescued.

"Something," observes the author in question, "was required to stir me up into practical activity. And I think nothing more remarkable in itself and its adaptation can be instanced in the history of human life than what took place. A series of providences followed, the overwhelming tendency of which will be allowed to have been just what was needed. And what they tended to, they accomplished. For a series of years I met with such striking deliverances in imminent hazards of life, that, unless I had done it wilfully, and had obstinately resisted their admonitions, I could not but be aroused to the most distinct feeling of the necessity of determining what was truth, and of acting in conformity to it.

"One summer evening, as I walked alone through the woods, a noise, some yards off to the left, suddenly arrested my attention. I was walking where I had no expectation of meeting with any human being, yet I thought I heard the voices of people conversing. I stopped short, and looked round, and saw a party of travellers, with a pack-horse, passing along among the trees, in an opposite direction to myself, about fifty paces on my left. Just at that part a pack-horse was an unusual thing, bullocks

being generally used for this mode of conveying baggage. My curiosity being thus excited, I still continued to gaze. Suddenly I heard the peculiar rustling that a large snake makes in passing through very dry grass. It was as distinct as if my ear were laid close to it. I looked. It was at my very feet. A long brown snake was uncurling himself, and stretching away his lithe and hateful shape from off the very spot on which my right foot would have been placed at the very step I was about to make. The bite of the species is considered to produce death in two or three hours, and to be so rapid in extending itself through the system, as scarcely to leave any hope from the most speedy excision of the part. My consciousness was instantly all about me. I saw that there had been but a sound between me and all that comes after death, be that what it might. It was coming very close to the brink of the void abysm, that I as yet had as the only representation of futurity. It compelled me to look fairly into it. I could not help thinking whether I might not have a soul, and whether that soul might not have a God to answer to for the deeds done in the body."

These are solemn thoughts and questionings,

and such as ought to suggest themselves to every rational mind, under similar circumstances. Yet, alas! what multitudes are there, whose hearts are so besotted and blinded by sin, that the most imminent dangers fail to arouse them to serious thoughts!

The late sir Thomas Fowell Buxton was so impressed by his own numerous and striking deliverances from positions of extreme danger, that he began to write a narrative of them; but the manuscript, unhappily, remains unfinished. Some of them, however, are recorded in his Memoirs. The testimony of an intellect such as his—so clear, manly, and vigorous, so free from the least taint or suspicion of fanaticism—to the fact that we do experience the interposing care of Providence, is of singular value. Seldom, indeed, has there been a more obvious and unmistakeable instance of providential interference, than the subjoined narrative of the escape of the future philanthropist.

"In the year 1806," he wrote, "I was travelling with the Earlham party in Scotland. I left them to return to the college of Dublin. In consequence of some conversation about the Parkgate vessels with my present wife, then Hannah Gurney, she extracted from me a

promise that I would never go by Parkgate. I was exceedingly impatient to be in Dublin, in order to prepare for my examination. When I reached Chester, the captain of the Parkgate vessel came to me, and invited me to go with him. The wind was fair, the vessel was to sail in a few hours; he was sure I should be in Dublin early the next morning, whereas a place in the Holyhead mail was doubtful, and at best I must lose the next day by travelling through Wales. My promise was a bitter mortification to me, but I could not dispense with it. I drank tea with a very large party. About eight or nine o'clock, they all went away on board the vessel; and of the 119 persons who embarked as passengers, 118 *were drowned before midnight!*"

Buxton had already begun to feel the importance of religion. This extraordinary escape seems to have deepened the impressions previously produced, and to have rendered them permanent. A very dangerous illness, in which his life was almost despaired of, led him, in the words of his biographer, to yield "to that ascendancy of religion over his mind, which gave shape and colouring to the whole of his after life."

He who watched over and preserved the life of the youth, whose subsequent career was destined to confer such unspeakable blessings on the African race, does not, however, disdain to embrace in his tender care the most ignorant and barbarous savages of that vast continent. "The Lord knoweth them that are his," and guards them from all evil with the same watchful love, whether "barbarian, Scythian, bond or free." Moffat, in his narrative of "Missionary Labours and Scenes in South Africa," thus describes an incident in the lives of Berend and Africaner, who, though at the time heathens, and violently opposed to the gospel, afterwards became devout and earnest Christians. "Among the remarkable interpositions of Providence in saving his life from destruction," says Mr. Moffat, "Berend, more than once, repeated the following with much emphasis. It happened when he was engaged in desperate conflict with Africaner, from whose lips I likewise heard it. They had been engaged for hours in mutual strife, taking and retaking a large herd of cattle. By means of the drove and bushes, each had managed to screen himself from his opponent. Suddenly a passage opened in the troop, which exposed the combatants to each other. Their

rifles were instantly levelled ; but, at the moment they touched the triggers, a cow darted in between them, and the two balls lodged in the animal, which fell dead on the spot. But for this interposition, they would probably *both* have fallen, for they were most expert marksmen. Titus, a man who could take his gun in the dead of night, enter an immense pool in the Orange River, swim to the centre, take his seat on a rock just above the surface of the water, and wait the approach of a hippopotamus, which he would shoot just as it opened its monstrous jaws to seize him ; a man who would deliberately smile the moment he laid the lion dead at his feet—this man, who appeared incapable of fear, reckless of danger, would say to me, when I spoke of this fact, ‘Mynheer,’ alluding to the power of the gospel, ‘knows how to use the only hammer which can make my heart feel.’”

In ascribing this escape to Divine intervention, many persons may be disposed to deride the supposition as fanatical or superstitious. It will appear to them absurd to suppose that the King, eternal, immortal, invisible, the blessed and only Potentate, should stoop to guard the lives of these two miserable naked

savages, engaged in despicable and incessant brawls. But such persons surely forget, or disbelieve, that even these degraded barbarians were endowed with an immortal nature, and destined to an eternal existence ; each the possessors of a soul to which there was not, in the perishable splendours of earth, anything comparable in value.

About thirty years ago, a deputation from the London Missionary Society, consisting of Mr. Bennett and the rev. Mr. Tyerman, was appointed to visit the foreign stations of that body. These gentlemen went forth, like Paul and Barnabas, commended in faith and prayer to the providence of God, and for a period of nearly ten years were kept unharmed amidst innumerable perils. In another part of our work we propose to draw from the narrative of their voyages, compiled by the poet Montgomery, another remarkable instance of providential interposition. At present, however, we only extract from it the following incident in the early life of Mr. Tyerman, as detailed by him in public just before leaving England. The event, we may observe, is illustrative of the providence of God, unaffected by any theory we may form as to the nature of dreams.



"Yesterday," said Mr. Tyerman, addressing his audience, "was the anniversary of a great and very remarkable deliverance, which I experienced in the year 1793. At that time I was intimate with several young men, as gay and trifling as myself, and we frequently spent our sabbaths in pleasure on the Thames. Early in the week, on the occasion referred to, I and four others had planned a Sunday party down the river; to make the most of it, we agreed to embark on Saturday afternoon, and proceed to Gravesend. On Friday night, when I lay down to rest, a transient misgiving, whether it was right so to profane the sabbath of the Lord, gave me a little uneasiness; but I overcame the monitory feeling, and fell asleep. On Saturday morning, when I awoke, the thought came upon me, but again I resisted it, and resolved to meet my companions in the afternoon. I was about to rise, but while I mused I fell asleep again, and dreamed. I thought myself in a certain place, whither Divine Providence often led me at that season of my life. Here a gentleman called me to him, saying that he had a letter for me, which I went to receive from his hand. When I reached him, he had opened the enclosure and appeared to

be reading the contents. I imagined then that I looked over his shoulder, and perceived that the letter was closely written; but a pen had been drawn through every line, and had obliterated all the words. Wondering what this could mean, I was going to take hold of the letter, when a large black seal presented itself to my sight, and so startled me that forthwith I awoke, with this sentence upon my mind, 'You shall not go!' Though I had never been in any way superstitious regarding dreams, this so affected me, and the words, 'You shall not go,' seemed so perpetually sounding in my ears, and haunting my imagination, that I determined to be obedient and not go—persuaded that some evil would befall me if I did. I spent that day and the two following in great anguish and anxiety, expecting hourly to hear something that would explain this singular presentiment. No tidings, however, arrived till Tuesday morning, when I read in a newspaper the following paragraph:—'Last Sunday, in the afternoon, as a boat, with four young gentlemen, a waterman, and a boy, belonging to Mr. —, of Wapping, was coming up the river, in Bugsby's Hole, a little below Blackwall, a gust of wind upset the boat, and all on

board perished.' That was the identical boat on which I was to have embarked. I could scarcely believe my eyes ; I read the paragraph again and again. There it was, and there it remained, speaking the same words. I cannot express the horror and consternation of my mind ; I was constrained to exclaim, ' This is the finger of God ! Who am I, that God should in so wonderful a manner interpose for my deliverance ? What a warning against sabbath-breaking ! What a call to devote myself to the Lord and his service ! '—A warning which I took, and a call which I humbly hope I was thenceforward enabled to obey."

In the cases already adduced, when many deliverances have happened to the same individual, they have been spread over several years, and intervals unmarked by any striking event have elapsed between the various occurrences. We now come to some in which the most extraordinary perils were encountered in close and rapid succession, in a manner which, were they not so well attested, would appear incredible.

In the annals of Christian missions, the name of captain James Wilson will ever hold an honourable place. His Christian devotedness

and nautical skill in the command of the missionary ship, the "Duff," largely aided in the introduction of the gospel to the South Sea Islands. Yet though, in his latter days, so eminent a servant of Christ, he was in his earlier years deeply tainted with infidelity. During this period of his history he underwent a long-continued series of sufferings and dangers, some of which we now lay before our readers.

In the year 1782, he had been employed in conveying naval stores to sir Edward Hughes, when he was captured, with his vessel, by admiral Suffrein, and carried into Cuddalore, then held by the French. Hyder Ally, who was at that time at war with the English, and unusually exasperated against them, was anxious to get as many prisoners as possible into his power, in order either to allure them into his service, or gratify his brutal ferocity by putting them to a painful death. He therefore offered to Suffrein the bribe of three hundred thousand rupees if he would give up his prisoners to him. To the disgrace of the French flag, Suffrein consented to this infamous proposal. Wilson, aware of what he might expect if he fell into the hands of "the Tiger

of the Carnatic," as the ferocious savage was called, determined, if possible, to make his escape. He communicated his resolution to a brother officer, imprisoned with him, and to a Bengalee servant-boy named Toby. The heart of the former failed him when the time came. Wilson and his servant, therefore, made the attempt alone: they crept softly up to the ramparts as soon as it grew dusk, and leaped down, uncertain of the depth into which they plunged, or of the nature of the soil which would receive them. The fall, which proved to be about forty feet, somewhat stunned Wilson; but he soon recovered, called to the boy to follow his example, and catching him in his arms when he made the leap. They set out together for Tranquebar, the nearest neutral settlement, ignorant of the distance they would have to travel, the nature of the country they must pass over, and the number, depth, and width of the rivers they must cross; knowing only the general direction of the route to be taken, and guiding their course by the stars. The whole of that district is intersected by streams, which are tributary to, or branch from, the great Coleroon; some of them being of considerable magnitude, and very rapid.

On reaching the first of these streams, Wilson found that the boy could not swim. Generously resolving not to leave him, he took him upon his back and swam over with him. Thus they passed three rivers. At Porto Nuovo, incautiously approaching too near a military post, they were heard by a sentinel, who challenged them; but by stealthily shrinking back into the jungle, they escaped detection. The river being at that point near the sea, is very deep and wide; and the tide, when Wilson and his companion reached the spot, was running with great rapidity. Not daring to wait for its ebb he plunged in, but the stream proved too powerful, and the boy, who clung to his back, becoming terrified at the breakers, clasped him so tightly that they both began to sink. After great effort he succeeded in disentangling himself, and returned to the shore. Finding that it was quite impossible for them both to cross, he gave the boy directions to proceed to a place where he might be safe, (which the youth, however, never reached,) and plunging into the stream, again endeavoured to push over. But the current was too powerful even for his unencumbered efforts; he was borne down by it, and again cast upon the bank he had so fruit-

lessly endeavoured to quit. At the place where he landed, he perceived a canoe drawn up on the beach. This he immediately seized, and was dragging it down to the river, when two men rushed out upon him, and endeavoured to hinder his purpose. By dint, however, of threats, persuasions, and force, Wilson induced them to convey him across.

He now hastened on with all his might, feeling that he should not be safe till he had put the Coleroon between himself and his pursuers. By break of day he reached the greatest arm of the river, the branches of which he had previously been crossing. Exhausted by fatigue (he had travelled forty miles since sunset,) and dismayed at the width of the mighty stream, he hesitated for a few moments and then plunged in. When about the middle, he came in contact with a piece of floating timber, to which he clung and rested for some time, how long he could not tell, for insensibility came over him. When consciousness returned, the sun had risen and he had drifted some distance down the stream. Refreshed by his repose, he struck out for the opposite bank, which he reached in safety. Had he known, at the time, the dangers he braved in his passage, it is probable

that even his lion-heart would have been appalled, for the river abounded in alligators, which were so numerous that, in ordinary circumstances, a slight noise would have brought them round any individual who attempted to ford the stream: an invisible Power on this occasion had, apparently, restrained them.

Having crossed this river, he believed his dangers to be over, and making his way through a jungle he reached the sea-coast. There he mounted a sand-bank to reconnoitre the surrounding country, when, to his consternation, he saw, and was seen by, a party of Hyder Ally's cavalry, who were engaged in scouring the district. They speedily seized him, stripped him naked, bound his hands behind his back, fastened a rope round his waist, and began to drive him, under a blazing sun, to head-quarters. The officer in command proceeded to interrogate him as to who he was and whither he was going? Captain Wilson ingenuously told him of his escape from Cuddalore, and the events of the past night. When he came to describe the passage of the Coleroon, the chief interrupted him, exclaiming, "That's a lie; no man ever did, or ever could pass the Coleroon by swimming. It is all alive with



alligators. You could not dip the tip of your finger into that river and escape being seized by them and torn to pieces." When they found that he had really spoken the truth, they lifted up their hands and cried out, "This is God's man!"

He was, however, forthwith marched back to Cuddalore, naked, bleeding, and covered with blisters; and thence sent on to Seringapatam, a distance of five hundred miles, still on foot and naked. His sufferings on the journey were dreadful. Insufficient and disgusting food, want of clothing, fatigue, intense heat, the cruelty of his captors, who goaded him with their lances till his flesh was covered with ulcerated wounds, and the loathsome dungeons into which he was thrust at night, made life an intolerable burden. The design of these cruelties was to break his spirit, and induce him to take service under Hyder Ally. The repeated and urgent offers to this effect were accepted by some of his fellow-prisoners, but were by him rejected with indignation and disdain.

Even greater sufferings awaited him at Seringapatam. For nearly two years he was confined in a noisome prison, suffering from dysentery, which rapidly carried off his fellow-

prisoners, to whom he was chained day and night. Frequently a dead corpse was removed from his arm in the morning, that another living sufferer might take his place, and sink and die in turn. Throughout this period his only bed was the bare earth, his only covering the few rags wrapped around him; his only food a pound of rice a day, and that so full of dirt and stones as to be almost uneatable, and utterly insufficient to supply his raging hunger. Like his fellow-sufferers, he was exposed to the cutting night-wind, the raging storm, the fierce noontide heat; he was infested, too, with vermin, and his fetters ate into his flesh. Yet he lived through it all.

After twenty-two months of this dreadful torture—this living death—the conclusion of a peace with the British government threw open the doors of Hyder's prison-house. One hundred and fifty-four persons had entered it, most of them the finest men in the British army, being the grenadier company of colonel Macleod's regiment of Highlanders. There came out only thirty-two emaciated, naked creatures, covered with ulcers, unable to stand, and looking more dead than alive.

Their liberation exposed them to a new

peril, to which many of those who escaped from the dungeon fell victims. They were unable to appease their craving for food, or to restrain their appetites. Along with others, captain Wilson was thrown into a violent fever, became delirious, and for a fortnight his life was despaired of. Yet God, who had purposes of mercy toward him, and who had guarded him amidst so many perils, brought him safely through this danger also ; and ere long he regained his former health and vigour.

Still throughout this period his heart continued hard, and he knew not the Hand that had preserved him ; he lived, emphatically, "without God in the world." After a most prosperous and successful course of mercantile enterprise in India, he was returning to England, to sit down and enjoy his competency, when he had as a fellow-passenger the rev. Mr. Thomas, one of the Baptist missionaries to Serampore, who was revisiting his native land. Captain Wilson, who was still an infidel, had repeated debates with him on the subject of religion, during the voyage ; but so inveterate did his unbelief seem, that Mr. Thomas remarked to the chief officer of the ship, that he should have much more hope of converting the

Lascars to Christianity than captain Wilson. But that which is impossible with man is possible with God. Captain Wilson settled at Portsea, where a discussion with a Christian gentleman led him to attend a place of worship ; and impressions were there made upon his heart which issued in the surrender of his entire being to God.

Some time after this happy change, he was meditating on the faith of Abraham, and the promptitude with which he obeyed the Divine call to leave his country and his home. He asked himself—Am I prepared to make such a sacrifice, and again to endure the privations, and brave the perils of the great deep ? Just then he heard of the design to send a missionary ship to cruise among the islands of the Pacific Ocean. Offering himself for the work, he was gratefully accepted, and had the honour, as we have previously mentioned, of commanding the first missionary vessel to the South Sea Islands ; thus carrying the gospel to hundreds of thousands of fierce cannibals and benighted idolaters. In reviewing this marvellous, but perfectly authenticated, history, who can help acknowledging the hand of God, whose providence, shrouded in mystery during the course of its

development, comes out in vivid distinctness at its close? "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

Among the fellow-sufferers with captain Wilson from the cruelty of Hyder Ally, was the late Philip Melvill, esq., afterwards the pious and devout governor of Pendennis Castle, whose memoirs have proved a fund of instruction to the Christian church. He, too, was in early life, to use his own words, "a wanderer from his father's house, a disciple in one of the worst schools in which a deluded world can place her votaries."

When serving in India, at the commencement of the war with Hyder Ally, captain Melvill, with his regiment, formed part of a small body of troops who were despatched into the Mysore, and were there surrounded by an army, which outnumbered them twenty-fold. A desperate action took place, in which the disciplined valour of the British was in vain opposed to the fearful odds against them. Very early in the engagement captain Melvill was wounded, but not seriously, and he still kept at the head of his men. Soon afterwards, turning

round to give the word of command, another ball struck him, shattering the arm and grazing the breast : had it not been for the slight change in posture at the moment, it must have shot him through the heart. He fell, and very soon the ranks of the little army were broken, and the enemy rushing in, an indiscriminate slaughter ensued. In the carnage he received a sabre cut on the other arm, which rendered it useless, by severing all the muscles. The victorious troops returned to strip and plunder the wounded or dead. Either in cruel sport, or for the purpose of securing the spoil for themselves, the party who seized him took him by the feet and dragged him some distance along the ground, his head striking against every stone, and his disabled arms trailing painfully behind him. Having stripped him naked, they left him, exposed by day to the burning sun, and by night to the wild beasts, which he heard howling round him. He saw them indeed repeatedly pass, and mangle the remains of his comrades, while him they did not touch. During this period he suffered greatly from the pain of his wounds, but still more from intense thirst, which he vainly endeavoured to assuage by gnawing whatever

grass or herbs were within reach. At length his agony became so intolerable that he attempted suicide, but his disabled arms and his enfeebled strength happily failed him, and he found himself unable to grasp the weapon which he intended to be the instrument of self-destruction. A party of the enemy's cavalry, however, had been despatched to examine the field of action, and bring in such of the wounded as might yet survive, their design being—as in captain Wilson's case—to inflict upon them indignities and tortures, which might compel them to take service under Hyder Ally. Melvill fainted on being moved, and recovered from insensibility only to find himself a captive in the hands of a ruthless foe. Many of his fellow-prisoners sank under the privation and sufferings of their dungeon in the course of a very few days. Though fearfully wounded, Melvill bore up under his trials, and was removed in about a month to Bangalore, a fortress in the heart of Mysore, where he remained a prisoner for four years. He says of his condition here: "Our couch was the bare earth, thinly sprinkled over with straw; the wretched clothing we wore by day was our only covering by night; the sweepings of the granaries formed our only

food. Swarms of odious and tormenting vermin bred in our wounds, and every abomination loathsome to sight and smell was allowed to accumulate in our dungeon, till it became intolerable to our guards. This full measure of woe was our portion during the remainder of our captivity. Many a victim sank under it, but more survived, to testify to the goodness of the Almighty in their deliverance from the sundry kinds of death which threatened to overwhelm us. How brittle is the thread of life in itself ! how indissoluble in connexion with Him who hath given to man his appointed time upon earth ! Neither sword, nor sickness, nor consuming grief, can execute its deadly purpose without his special commission ; his ministers they are, and they cannot go beyond his word."

At last deliverance arrived. Peace was concluded, and the wretched prisoners were set free. A gaunt and hideous band they were ; their bones standing out, and almost protruding through the skin ; their eager, hungry eyes, their shrunk pallid cheeks, their squalid filth and matted hair—all testified to the extremity of their sufferings. But, as in the case of captain Wilson, Mr. Melvill's heart was melted neither



by danger nor deliverance; till, some years afterwards, the truths of the gospel aroused his slumbering conscience, and brought him a penitent to the feet of the Saviour. Then he could look back with wondering and adoring gratitude to the Almighty Friend who had watched over him at a time when he knew him not, and delivered him from death, when to die would have been to perish for ever.

The narratives of captain Wilson and governor Melvill will have reminded many readers of the eventful career of colonel Gardiner, from the points of resemblance between them. A few brief notices of his well-known history will suffice for our present purpose.

Colonel Gardiner entered the army when very young, and followed the duke of Marlborough through his bloody and victorious campaign in Flanders. At the battle of Ramillies, his escape seems almost miraculous. A ball entered his mouth, passed through the back of his neck, and just missing the spinal column, came out behind. The allied army pursuing the enemy, the wounded were left upon the field, surrounded by heaps of slain, and exposed to the inclemency of the weather. In the morning, some French stragglers came up and

began to plunder the slain. Seeing the wounded youth (he was but nineteen) apparently just expiring, one of them was on the point of thrusting his sword through his breast, to destroy the little remainder of life, when, at the critical moment, a cordelier who accompanied the plunderers came up and checked his hand, saying, "Do not kill that poor child." A little wine being poured down his throat, he recovered from his death-like swoon, and he succeeded in inducing the men to carry him to a neighbouring convent, which he reached in safety, though he often seemed to be dying whilst on the way, and even besought those who carried him to kill him, that he might escape the excruciating anguish of his wound. As he was two nights and a day before his wounds were dressed, he often spoke of it as another astonishing providence that he had not bled to death. Though kindly received at the convent, a new danger awaited him there, from the ignorance and rudeness of the barber-surgeon who attended him. But by the blessing of God he survived all.

The next eleven years of his life, his biographer and friend, Dr. Doddridge, describes as "wild, thoughtless, and wretched." Throughout

this interval he was constantly rushing into danger, in consequence of his hot, impetuous valour ; but still he was preserved by the watchful care of that God whom he was defying by his course of reckless profligacy. Toward the close of this unhappy period, two remarkable deliverances happened to him. As he was riding at full speed, down hill, in the streets of Calais, his horse fell, threw him over its head, pitched over him, and was killed by the fall ; yet he received no hurt ! Shortly afterwards, on returning to England, so violent a storm broke upon the vessel, that the captain urged the passengers and crew to go to prayers immediately, if they meant to go at all, for that in a very few minutes they must be at the bottom. In this extremity of danger, he did pray with the utmost fervency ; and it was remarked, that whilst crying to God for deliverance, the storm abated, and they escaped. But so little affected was he by this rescue from impending death, that when some of his gay companions rallied him on the efficacy of his prayers, he excused himself from the scandal of being thought in earnest, by saying “that it happened at midnight, when his mother and aunt were asleep, or he should have left that part of the business

to them." "He recounted these things to me," says Dr. Doddridge, "with the greatest humility, as showing how utterly unworthy he was of the miracle of grace, by which he was quickly after brought to so true and prevalent a sense of religion." How truly he became, what his biographer here terms him, "a miracle of grace," is too well known, however, to need further illustration at our hands.

As many of our readers will probably be persons in humble life, who have enjoyed small educational advantages, it may be of interest to them to give some illustrative incidents of the providential care of God extended to individuals in a social position similar to their own. For this purpose we select and condense a few extracts from the "Life of George Noscoe, a Norwegian sailor." An introduction, from the pen of Dr. Raffles, of Liverpool, vouches for the truth of the narrative.

When quite a lad, Noscoe went to sea, as a cabin boy, and, as is often the case, was treated with the utmost cruelty by the mate of the ship, from whose hands he, on more than one occasion, narrowly escaped with his life. When at Gibraltar, he was ordered to draw up a heavy bucket of water from over the ship's

side. Not daring to disobey, he tried to do so, but was overbalanced by the weight, fell overboard, and sank to the bottom. Though four or five fathoms deep, the sea was so clear that the crew could see him, and were able to fish him up by means of a grappling iron affixed to a long line. He was apparently dead, but after using means for his restoration for about half an hour, animation returned.

The next day the brig sailed for the coast of Africa. As they lay becalmed, they were boarded by Algerine pirates, who plundered the ship of every morsel of provisions. The captain fell on his knees, imploring them to leave a little food to keep them from starvation, but they unfeelingly cut him down and left the vessel. Happily a breeze sprang up, which carried the remainder of the crew into Malaga. Here a new danger awaited them; they found the plague raging so fearfully that one vessel lost the whole of her officers and crew. God, however, in his great mercy, guarded them from "the pestilence that walketh in darkness," and Noscoe returned to Norway in safety.

Some years afterwards, during an action on board a French frigate in which Noscoe was

serving, the man standing next him was killed by a ball, and Noscoe himself fell stunned and covered with blood. He was carried to the surgeon, and on recovering from his swoon, was ordered to return to his gun. On reaching it he found that during his brief absence it had been dismounted, and every man in charge of it killed by the deadly fire of the enemy. He then went to the fourth gun, where three men had already fallen. Soon after, a shot came which split the gun-carriage, and took off the leg of a man who stood just behind him. He picked up the sufferer, took him upon his back, and was carrying him below, when, as he reached the hatchway and was descending the ladder, another ball struck the burden from his back. When the engagement ceased, the deck was piled with corpses and drenched with blood; yet was Noscoe's life again spared.

He records many more dangers escaped, sometimes in action, sometimes in his endeavours to desert from the French to the English service, the latter of which he, in common with his countrymen, much preferred. These incidents in his life, however, from want of space we are compelled to omit, with the exception of the following one, which happened

to him when he was escaping from a French ship of war on the coast of Madagascar. Having reached the shore in a boat with a comrade who joined him, they wandered through the wood in the mountains to escape the parties sent in pursuit. Night came on, and they heard the roaring of the wild beasts which fill those solitudes. They therefore resolved to climb a tree, under which at the time they were sitting. They did so, and before long, by the light of the rising moon, they saw two tigers making for the spot which they had just left. "The tree," says Noscoe, "was on the very brink of a hill ; its root was grafted in the rock, and a little moss and earth covered it over. As soon as the tigers got under the tree, they could smell where we had been sitting, and began to tear up the ground ; we were afraid they would tear up the tree by the roots ; but the same God that preserved me from the watery grave, and from the ball of the cannon, and from the power of the pestilence, also preserved me from the jaws of the tiger ; *for, behold, God was there, and I knew it not.* After they had been scratching and roaring for about half an hour, they went away, roaring as they went, and we saw them no more."

His career of peril was not yet over. Escapes from hunger, from sickness, from drowning, and from fire, still awaited him ; but we need not follow his eventful career to a greater length. It is sufficient to say, that at last the extraordinary dealings of Providence with which he had been visited, led him to deep self-examination, which issued, under the blessing of God, in unfeigned repentance. He became "a new creature in Christ Jesus," and for twenty-nine years and a half gave evidence of the reality of the change which had passed upon him by a holy and useful life, crowned at Liverpool by a peaceful and triumphant death.

The narratives which we have hitherto presented to our readers, have detailed deliverances experienced by persons at a time when they were actively engaged in the business of life. New views of our subject open to us, when we consider the numerous instances in which the providence of God has watched over the infancy and youth of those who, by their labours, proved blessings to the world and the church.

The pious Doddridge was, at the moment of his birth, so frail and feeble that he was laid aside as dead. One of the attendants, however, thought that she perceived some faint indi-



cations of life, and by her fostering care the spark, just flickering on the point of extinction, was preserved; but he always continued to be of so delicate and consumptive a frame, that with each succeeding birthday he expressed his surprise that his frail life should have continued for another year. This fact may have proved to him an additional stimulus to diligence and activity, as we know that a similar one did to Richard Baxter, who, to use his own phrase, wrote "with one foot in the grave." They both entered upon every engagement with a solemn sense that it might, very probably, prove their last. Whatsoever their hands found to do, they did with all their might; because there was no work, no device, found in the grave, whither they were hastening. But the Most High, contrary to all their expectations, not only gave them this incentive to intensity of daily action, but lengthened out their laborious and useful lives through a long term of years.

John Wesley, like Dr. Doddridge, was only saved from death in childhood by what the world would call the merest chance. His father was aroused from sleep by a cry of fire from the street. He started up, little supposing

that it was his own house which was on fire. On opening his bedroom-door he found the place full of smoke, and the roof already burned through. Directing his wife and two daughters to fly for their lives, he hastened to the nursery, where the maid was sleeping with five children. She snatched up the youngest in her arms, and bade the others follow her ; three did so, but John was not awakened by the noise, and still slept on. In the hurry and agitation of the moment he was forgotten. All the rest of the family were in safety, some having leaped from the windows as the only means of escape, while Mrs. Wesley, to use her own expression, "waded through the fire." At this moment, when they were rejoicing in their deliverance, John, who had not been missed, was heard crying in the nursery. To rush back into the house, and spring upon the stairs in order to rescue him, was the work of a moment with the father ; but, to his consternation and horror, he found that the staircase was just burned through, and any attempt to pass further was hopeless. In despair of the child's deliverance, the father fell upon his knees in the hall with the flames all round him, and commended its young spirit to God. John had

been aroused by the light, had uttered the cry of terror which had informed his parents of his danger, had endeavoured to escape by the door, but found all egress impossible; he had then climbed upon a chest up to the window, and he was seen from the yard. There was no time to procure a ladder, for the flames were already leaping towards him, and seemed to be lapping at him with their forked fiery tongues. In a few moments more it would have been all over; but He to whom "belong the issues from death" had a work for that child to accomplish. One man was instantly hoisted upon the shoulders of another; the window was thus reached, and the child was saved. *A moment afterwards, the roof fell in.* When he was saved the father cried out, "Come, neighbours, let us kneel down together, and give thanks to God! He has given me all my eight children; let the house go, I am rich enough." Could he but have foreseen the future of that child, so wonderfully preserved from the flames, the good old man's gratitude would have been even more intense. Mr. Wesley himself always looked back with special feeling towards this deliverance. Under one of the portraits of him, published during his lifetime, is a representa-

tion of the house in flames, with the motto, "Is not this a brand plucked from the burning?"

Philip Henry, father of the commentator, and one of the most devoted and useful preachers of his day, had, in his boyhood, an escape from fire scarcely less remarkable than that of John Wesley. He was at Westminster school, where he had formed the dangerous habit of reading in bed. One night, as he was thus occupied, he was overcome with sleep; and the candle having fallen, the bed took fire, and was partly consumed before he awoke. Nothing but the arrival of speedy and sufficient help saved him from death.

Dr. Adam Clarke, in his boyhood, escaped from danger even more imminent. He rode a horse down to a large river, which flowed near his father's house, and attempted to cross it; the stream proved both deeper and stronger than he anticipated. The horse lost its footing and was swept down the current. He was speedily carried off its back, lost his consciousness, sank, and continued in the water he knew not how long; for the next thing he could remember was his recovering from insensibility on the bank of the river. He must have been drifted there by the stream, and the hot summer

sun must have acted as a restorative to the system. Sixty years afterward he related this fact in a sermon preached before the Royal Humane Society.

A providential escape of a similar character was experienced by the excellent and devout Cecil. Whilst quite a youth he was playing in a yard at the back of his father's house, in which were several large tanks of water. One of these, which was sunk in the earth, was frozen over, and a hole had been made in the ice for the purpose of watering the horses. At this hole Richard Cecil was playing with a stick, when suddenly his foot slipped, he plunged into the hole, and was carried under the ice. The workmen in his father's employ had received particular orders over-night to go to work in a part of a dye-house from which this piece of water was not visible; but without any assignable reason, they disobeyed the orders given them, and were at work near the tank in question. So sudden and so noiseless had been the plunge, that none of them perceived it at the time; but a few minutes afterward one of the men thought he saw a scarlet cloak appear at the hole, and resolved to go and see what it was. In attempting to get it out he discovered

it to be the scarlet cloak of his young master. The boy was drawn from the freezing water apparently dead, but proper means being used to restore animation, after long efforts life returned.

Some time after this Cecil was caught by the coat in the wheel of a horse-mill, and was on the point of being drawn in and crushed to atoms. With marvellous quickness and presence of mind, he noticed that the head of the horse which worked the mill was within reach of his feet; he therefore dashed them violently into the animal's face, and thus checking its progress, stopped the mill, and then succeeded in extricating himself.

He lamented in after life that these events, so fitted to arrest the mind, and lead him to a grateful dedication of himself to God, should have produced no more than a mere temporary excitement of feeling. For years afterwards he lived in sin, and sought to silence the accusations of conscience by scepticism; till at length God, who had guarded his life amidst these perils, in great mercy delivered him from that fearful condition of spiritual darkness, and made him "a burning and a shining light."

Instances similar to those adduced in this

chapter might be indefinitely multiplied, but the truth intended to be enforced has been, perhaps, sufficiently illustrated. We have seen, in the course of our narrative, many individuals rescued from imminent danger by means the most obviously providential in their character. At the time of their escape they have been ignorant, or unmindful, of the great Deliverer who rescued "their souls from death;" but in after life they have, with adoring gratitude, owned "the good hand of God upon them." There are few lives, however, in which at some period or other remarkable deliverances have not been enjoyed. Yet how rare the instances in which the life forfeited by sin, threatened by danger, yet preserved by God, is devoted to his glory! Still, as with the lepers healed by our Lord,

"Ten cleansed, and only one remain!  
Who would have thought our nature's stain  
Was dyed so foul, so deep in grain?"

Alas! that life should be spared only to give space for the man to fill up the measure of his iniquities to the uttermost!—only that he, by despising the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, may treasure up unto himself wrath against the day of wrath

and revelation of the righteous judgment of God! Of this we have a mournful illustration in the life of the notorious and profane infidel, Thomas Paine. He himself thus recites some of the events which happened to him during the reign of terror in France:—

“I was one of the nine members,” he says, “who composed the first committee of constitution. Six of them have been destroyed; Sièyes, and myself, have survived—he, by bending—I, by not bending: the other survivor joined Robespierre, and with him signed the warrant for my arrest. After the fall of Robespierre, he in his turn was seized and imprisoned.

“Herault Séchelles was my *suppléant* as member of committee; that is, he was to supply my place if I had not accepted or had resigned it. He was imprisoned in the Luxembourg with me, was taken to the tribunal and to the guillotine; and I, his principal, was left.

“There were but two foreigners in the convention, Anarcharsis Cloots and myself. We were both put out of the convention by the same vote, arrested by the same order, and carried to prison together. He was guillotined, and I was again left.



“ Joseph Lebon, one of the vilest wretches who ever lived, who made the streets of Arras run red with blood, was my *suppléant* for the department of the Pays de Calais. When I was put out of the convention, he came and took my place; when I was liberated from prison, and voted again into the convention, he was sent to the same prison, and took my place there; and he went to the guillotine instead of me. He supplied my place all the way through.

“ One hundred and sixty-eight persons were taken out of the Luxembourg in one night, and a hundred and sixty of them guillotined the next day, of which I know I was to have been one; and the manner I escaped that fate is curious, and has all the appearance of accident. The room in which I was lodged was one of a long range, the doors of which opened outward and fell flat against the wall, so that when it was open the inside of the door appeared outward. When persons, by scores and by hundreds, were taken out of the prison for the guillotine, it was always done by night, and those who performed that office had a private mark or signal by which they knew what rooms to go to, and what number to take.

“ We were four, and the door of our room was marked with that number in chalk; but it happened, if *happening* is the proper word, the mark was put on the door when it was open and flat against the wall, and thereby came on the inside when we shut it for the night,—and the destroying angel passed by me. A few days afterward Robespierre fell. During the whole of my imprisonment there was no time when my life was worth twenty-four hours’ purchase.”

And yet thus warned, and thus marvellously preserved, he continued insensible to the kind and gracious Hand which had sustained him; and he died, as is well known, with his mouth filled with alternate blasphemies and supplications for mercy.

## CHAPTER II.

FAITH AND PRAYER REWARDED BY SIGNAL DELIVERANCES FROM IMMINENT PERILS.

THOUGH "the Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works," yet the promises of providential care are made, the pledges of it are given, to the righteous exclusively. With them it is a matter of express stipulation and covenant, that "all things" shall "work together for their good." "Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy." His "eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards him." The ultimate design of universal providence is, the welfare and safety of "them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose." Just as a kind and affectionate father regulates his household, and manages his estate, with a special reference to the interests of his children ; so

does "our Father who is heaven" make the noblest interests of his adopted family the end and purpose of his providential government.

Scripture furnishes us with innumerable instances of this. When the swollen clouds and the heavy bursting earth were ready to pour forth their torrents, they must wait till Noah had entered the ark and God had shut him in, "and on the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened." When the tempest of fire was prepared to destroy the doomed and guilty cities of the plain, and the ministers of vengeance had waited through the night whilst Lot lingered, they at length hurry him from the city toward the place of refuge, saying, "Haste thee, thither; for we cannot do anything till thou be come thither." Our Lord sets the same truth before us in the parable of the householder, to whom his servants come to say that tares have sprung up in his wheat, and to ask permission to uproot them; but he refuses "lest ye root up also the wheat with them." The presence, too, of Paul and his companions in the storm-tossed vessel saved the mariners and their fellow-passengers from a watery grave. We shall find abundant con-

firmation of this truth, and fulfilment of these promises, in the lives of those who in subsequent times have committed themselves to God by faith and prayer.

PERIODS OF PERSECUTION have singularly illustrated this providential care of God for his people. In such times his hand has been as it were visibly stretched out, protecting them from the fury of their enemies, and rescuing them when all hope of deliverance from man seemed to have terminated. Instead of ranging over the wide field of illustration presented by ecclesiastical history, we shall confine ourselves to some incidents connected with the long and cruel severities practised by the Roman Catholics of France upon the Protestants in that kingdom.

On one occasion the prince of Condé and admiral Coligny—the leaders of the Huguenot party—had been driven from their homes by their opponents, who had attempted cruelly to massacre them ; they took to flight accordingly with their helpless and terrified families. “ The prince of Condé set out silently,” says Matthieu, an eye-witness of the events he narrates, “ but his situation touched all hearts with pity, when they saw the first prince of the blood setting

forward in the intensest and extremest heat, with his wife on the point of giving birth to a child, and three little children borne after them, followed by the now motherless family of Coligny, of whom only one was able to walk. The wife of D'Andelot, too, was there with her little girl only two years old, and several other ladies. The only escort for this troop of helpless women and children was one hundred and fifty soldiers, headed by the two brave and affectionate fathers.

“ They journeyed on as rapidly as possible, for their only hope of safety lay in crossing the Loire before they could be overtaken, and then seeking shelter in Rochelle; but the whole country was filled with hostile troops, and the bridges over the Loire were already occupied. They therefore determined to attempt a ford not commonly known, and arrived at it when the river, usually broad and furious, was so far diminished by the long drought that they crossed without difficulty, the prince carrying his youngest infant on his arm, clasped to his bosom. But scarcely had they reached the southern bank, when turning round they discovered the cavalry of their enemies in full pursuit, crowding rapidly upon the opposite side.

An event now happened certainly very remarkable. Without any apparent cause, a sudden swell of waters came foaming and rushing down the stream, and in an instant filling the channel, rendered the ford impassable, and the defenceless company were thus rescued from the jaws of their destroyer. Can we wonder that men taught to rest upon Providence, and discern the Almighty hand in the events of their agitated lives, should have regarded this as a signal interposition in their favour, and an undoubted sign that his arm was extended for their preservation?" \*

This fact rests not upon the Protestant historians alone. In its main features it is abundantly confirmed by contemporary Roman Catholic writers ; among the rest by the Jesuit Davila.

On several occasions the life of admiral Coligny was attempted by assassination, but it was as marvellously preserved as it had been in the above instance. Once a servant in his employ was tempted by the offer of a large reward by Catherine, the infamous queen-mother, to poison his master. The plot was on the very point of succeeding, when the pertur-

\* Mrs. Marsh's "History of the Huguenots."

bation and agitation evinced in the man's countenance excited suspicion of treachery. He was seized, and confessed the intended crime just in time to save the admiral's life. It is true that Coligny did at last fall under the hand of assassins at the massacre of St. Bartholomew; yet his days were lengthened out until his work was done.

During the siege of Rochelle, the Protestant party were reduced to the utmost straits by famine. "They had eaten," says a contemporary, "first the asses, then the mules; horses, cats, rats, and moles, and the flesh of dogs, were sold in the open market. When there was nothing more of that sort to be got, they boiled leather, the skins of dogs and horses; then emptied the tanners' and curriers' yards, using leather and the hoofs and horns of oxen and horses." After their faith and endurance had been thus severely tested by the horrors of famine, and when it was impossible that they could hold out much longer, a supply came scarcely less marvellous and abundant than that of the quails in the wilderness. The most extraordinary quantities of fish which had ever been known within the memory of man poured into the harbour. At low water, the people went down



to the beach with their weapons in their hands, and baskets slung to their sides, which they filled with the utmost ease. Abundance took the place of famine, and a sufficiency of food was enjoyed during the whole time the siege lasted. It will not be wondered at that the ministers, during the continuance of the siege, constantly appealed to this fact as a proof that God was with them, and availed themselves of it as an argument to induce in their flocks a more resolute and strenuous determination not to yield. "To this day," says D'Aubigné, writing a few years after the event, "the people of Rochelle keep pictures in their houses in memory of this fact."\*

Merivault records the following incident as having happened at a subsequent siege of the same city:—"During the extremity of hunger among the Rochellois, some charitable individuals, who had previously formed secret magazines, relieved their starving brethren without blazoning abroad their good deeds. The widow of a merchant named Prosni, who was left

\* A similar incident is recorded of some of the Puritan emigrants to America in the seventeenth century, who, disappointed of receiving the expected supplies, were maintained and preserved from starvation in a like mode, till their long looked-for vessel arrived.

with four children, had liberally distributed her stores while she had anything remaining among her less fortunate neighbours ; and whenever she was reproached with profusion and want of foresight by a rich sister-in-law of less benevolent temper, she was in the habit of replying, ' The Lord will provide for us.' At length her stock of food was exhausted, and she was spurned from the door of her wealthy relative to whom she applied for help. She returned home, destitute, broken-hearted, and prepared to die, together with her children. But it seemed as though the mercies once displayed at Zarephath were again to be manifested ; and that there was still a barrel and a cruse in reserve for the widow, who, humbly confident in the bounty of Providence, had shared her last morsel with the suppliant in affliction. Her little ones met her with cries of joy. During her short absence, a stranger visiting the house had deposited in it a bag of flour, and the single bushel it contained was so husbanded as to preserve their lives till the end of the siege. Their unknown benefactor was never revealed ; but the pious mother was able to reply to her unbelieving kinsman, ' The Lord hath provided.'"

The dragonnades which preceded and followed the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, involved the Protestants in frightful peril, and witnessed many signal deliverances. Without pronouncing an opinion upon the course pursued by some of the Huguenots, we cannot be blind to the fact, that those who took the sword perished by the sword; whilst very many of those who, when they suffered threatened not, but committed themselves to Him that judgeth righteously, escaped. The history of Paul Rabaut, one of the most earnest, devoted, and daring of the "pastors of the desert," affords a striking illustration of this.

He was born 9th January, 1718, and as he attained manhood, he entered upon the pastoral office, though it was an almost certain path to the gibbet or the wheel. Where he resided during the half century of his ministry it would be difficult to say, for during almost the whole of that time he was in hiding, while during a large part of it a price was set upon his head. So far from coinciding with his brethren in their armed resistance to the troops sent against them, he ever maintained that readiness to suffer martyrdom was the surest means of promoting the cause of Christ. On one occasion

he met a party of armed men proceeding to liberate one of the Protestant pastors. His own arrest at that time seemed inevitable. He stopped them, and with tears earnestly besought them, that if he should fall into the hands of the persecutors, they would not embitter his last moments by attempting his rescue by force of arms ; and he extracted from them a promise to this effect, as the only condition on which he would continue to hold the pastoral office. Though a proscribed outlaw, he preached constantly and boldly, and in the proclamation of the gospel encountered perils from which almost all save himself would have shrunk with terror. Yet he saw nearly all his associates cut off by violent and bloody deaths, whilst he died in his bed at the age of seventy-seven.

Among the vicissitudes of danger and escape which marked his adventurous life were the following. On one occasion his hiding-place was discovered, and he was traced to the house of a baker ; the place was forthwith invested, and every avenue of escape blocked up. Hastily putting on the dress of a working baker, and dusting himself over with flour, he took an empty wine-flask in his hand, and, as though

going out to procure wine, boldly passed the sentinels, who failed to recognise him in his disguise, which was rendered more complete by his holding a rose in his mouth, thus hiding the lower part of his face.

On another occasion, when closely pursued, he took refuge in the humble dwelling of a poor woman, who had given birth to a child only a few days previously. Regardless of her own condition, she rose from her bed, sent away the nurse, took the infant on her knees, disguised Rabaut in her own nightcap, and put him into bed. The soldiers arrived, and mistaking the mother (with whom they were unacquainted) for the nurse, and Rabaut for the mother, left the house, supposing that they had been mistaken in their suspicions.

Although Rabaut made every possible exertion for escaping the perils which beset him, and though he never had recourse to violence, yet he did not hesitate to face danger if the cause of Christ or of his brethren required it. When the prisons and galleys were crowded with Protestants, and the scaffolds were drenched with their blood, he alone ventured to present a petition to the marquis de Paulmy, governor of the province. He met him on the high road,

surrounded by his guard of honour, fearlessly but respectfully accosted him, and made known his wishes. The marquis, charmed by his free, dauntless bearing, and the spirit of self-devotion he evinced, conversed with him some time, and then generously let him go free. At that time his arrest would have been followed by his certain and immediate execution.

As intimidation was found ineffectual, and as the providence of God bore him harmless amidst all the attempts which were made upon his life, the government, in despair of silencing him by other means, offered him a large bribe if he would quit France. This he, of course, indignantly rejected, and he continued to preach, till at length his constancy was rewarded by his living to hear liberty of conscience and freedom of worship proclaimed by law.

But his perils were not yet over. In his old age the French revolution broke out, and notwithstanding his sufferings in the cause of liberty, he was arrested by order of the convention, and sentenced to the guillotine. His advanced years and infirmities failed to soften the hard hearts of the wretches who were sent by the Jacobin government to superintend the judicial murders at Nîmes. Too feeble to

walk, he was thrown across an ass, and thus conveyed to prison, whence he was only to come out to the scaffold. But he was not forgotten, even in this the most perilous crisis of his adventurous life. The fall of Robespierre restored him, and thousands more, to liberty. Full of years, and with his death-bed surrounded by loving friends, "he fell asleep" on the 5th September, 1794, the sole survivor of the "pastors of the desert."

The interesting field of CHRISTIAN MISSIONS has exemplified in a remarkable manner the protecting care of God as extended to his servants, who have gone forth—often with their lives in their hands—to preach his gospel. In this department of our subject, indeed, the illustrations could be almost indefinitely multiplied, but the following instances will sufficiently prove to the reader how safe and secure are those who commit themselves to the providence of God, while humbly endeavouring to perform his will.

Few histories contain the narratives of more signal and numerous Divine interpositions than that of the Moravian missionaries in Greenland. The simple faith and self-devotedness with which they addressed themselves to their work,

in calm reliance upon Him who had promised to "supply all their need," seems to have received a special blessing. Some of them plunged into the depths of that barren ice-bound region, and took up their abode among the eternal snows which encircle the pole. Their life depended upon the arrival of a vessel annually freighted from Denmark with provisions, clothing, and other necessities; and though, by the detention of this ship, they were often reduced to great suffering, yet they were never left utterly destitute. The vessel always arrived before their supplies were quite exhausted, *nor was it ever wrecked*. The latter circumstance is a most remarkable one, when we remember the dangerous character of the seas through which the ship had to sail, and the numerous wrecks which annually occur in that inhospitable and terrible coast.

Nor were the providential interpositions on their behalf confined to the safe and timely arrival of their annual consignment of provisions. Oftentimes, when suffering from famine, some altogether unexpected supply came. Once they were reduced so low that some old tallow candles were their only food, and even these were on the point of being exhausted, when a



Greenlander, an entire stranger to them, and with whom they had had no previous intercourse, travelled forty leagues to sell them some seals, oatmeal, and train oil—choice delicacies compared with the nauseous fare which had been their previous diet. At another time, they had just returned empty-handed from a distant and wearisome journey in search of food, when a native brought them the intelligence that a Dutch ship was lying at some distance to the south, the captain of which had letters for them. At once they despatched messengers to it, who found on board a cask of provisions from a friend at Amsterdam, with a letter promising to repeat the gift if it were needed. One night they were returning home exhausted with hunger and toil, when a storm suddenly burst upon them, and drove their frail boat upon a desolate island—a circumstance which rendered it impossible for them to proceed till the wind should abate, or change its direction. Enfeebled as they were by long fasting, they would soon have been unable to manage their little skiff in those tempestuous seas, and must probably have perished on the island, or in the endeavour to leave it, when an eagle fell in their way, which they succeeded in killing, and thus sup-

plied their craving hunger and recruited their failing strength. But lack of food was not the only peril to which they were exposed. They were surrounded by other dangers, as the following oft-told but ever-interesting narrative will show.

At the period when the incident about to be narrated happened, they occupied three mission stations on the coast of Labrador, under the superintendence of Samuel Liebrisch, who resided at Nain, the most southern of them. It was Liebrisch's duty to visit at intervals the other two stations, the most distant of which, Okkah, lay about one hundred and fifty miles to the north. In making his journeys to these places, he travelled, like the Esquimaux, in sledges drawn by dogs over the frozen sea. In calm frosty weather, this is a pleasant and rapid mode of transit. The dogs bound merrily along over the glassy surface at the rate of seven or eight miles an hour, and the motion of the sledge is smooth and agreeable. But there are two dangers to be apprehended; the one, a thaw, rendering the ice rotten and causing it to give way; the other, the rising of a storm, which, driving the waves with great force under the ice, cracks it into

pieces, and sometimes breaks it up altogether.

On the morning of March 11th, 1782, a missionary party set out from Nain for Okkak, fearing neither of these evils; the morning was clear, calm, and frosty, the stars shining with great brilliancy, and the ice in the best possible order. They, therefore, hoped to reach Okkak in three or four days at furthest; but shortly after starting they met with some Esquimaux, who warned them that the ice was beginning to break up, and advised them to return. As there seemed nothing to warrant the apprehensions expressed, they supposed that the Esquimaux were giving a false alarm, from a desire to have the society of their friends who were driving the sledges of the missionaries. They, therefore, determined to proceed. At mid-day there was still no appearance of change in the weather—all seemed bright and calm as before; but a disagreeable sensation, as though there was a strong ground-swell, causing the ice to heave and roll beneath them, began to be felt. They now stopped, and one of the party getting out put his ear to the ice, and heard a harsh, hollow, grating sound, which was at once recognised as the warning of

danger. They, therefore, deemed it prudent to keep closer to the shore. Cracks and fissures in the hitherto unbroken surface—sometimes extending two or three feet in breadth—now began to appear. These, however, are common, and to those accustomed to sledge travelling are of little consequence. The dogs easily leap over such interstices, drawing the sledges after them, and it only requires some degree of caution and skill, on the part of the travellers, to maintain the balance. Towards evening, however, the sky became clouded, the wind arose, and all the indications of an approaching storm manifested themselves. The snow began to drift violently, and the sledges, instead of gliding smoothly and steadily onward, acquired an oscillating and undulatory motion. Noises were heard in all directions; sometimes from the bursting up of the ice-plains, loud and violent, like the report of a park of artillery; sometimes harsh, dull, and grating, as the vast disrupted masses ground against one another, being forced into collision by the combined action upon them of the winds and waves.

The Esquimaux, well aware what these signs portended, drove with all possible speed toward the shore; but as they approached it,

they were appalled at the spectacle which presented itself. The ice, rent away from the rocks, was forced up and down as the waves sank and rose, breaking into fragments against the cliffs with terrific violence. The noise from the roaring of the wind, and the crashing and bursting of the ice-plains, was tremendous, and as the snow drifted heavily at the time, the travellers could neither see nor hear distinctly. The affrighted dogs, too, could scarcely be urged forward, and frequently stopped altogether. The field of ice on which they were was in ceaseless motion, sometimes raised far above the level of the coast, and at others depressed below it, as the stormy waters beneath happened to rise or fall. It was only at the moment when the ice and the top of the cliffs were parallel, that they could hope to land at all. If they made the attempt and failed, their destruction was inevitable. Having committed themselves, therefore, to God, they watched their opportunity, and impelling their terrified dogs forward at the critical moment, the whole party providentially succeeded in gaining the shore.

Scarcely had they done so, and uttered a fervent ejaculation of praise to their great

Deliverer, when they beheld a scene of awful and tremendous grandeur. The field of ice from which they had the instant before escaped, burst asunder with a deafening roar into ten thousand fragments, and was swallowed up in the yeast of waves. Then, as if at a given signal, the whole mass, for miles in extent, burst up, and was overwhelmed by the raging sea.

The missionaries fell upon their knees, and poured out their hearts in gratitude for their almost miraculous deliverance; and even the heathen Esquimaux, awed at the sight, acknowledged that this was none other than "the hand of God." But their perils were far from over. The tempest was howling round them with increased fury, and they had no shelter, save such as the snow could be made to afford; their stock of provisions was but small, and it might be very many days before the ice formed again, so as to allow of their escape from the spot, which was at once their refuge and their dreary prison.

Their first effort was to build a snow-house. This they completed by about nine o'clock at night, and crept into it, thankful for even this poor shelter from the keen piercing wind, which

had become so violent that they could hardly stand against it. The Esquimaux slept instantly and soundly ; but, wearied as Liebrisch was with the toils of the day, he could not sleep ; agitation and excitement of feeling kept him awake. Well for them was it that he could not ; for it proved the deliverance of the party from a new and unexpected danger. About two o'clock in the morning, he fancied that some of the water which dripped upon him tasted salt. The next drop which fell on his lips confirmed his suspicions ; they had built their hut too near the beach, and the tide, brought up by the wind, was breaking over and surrounding them. He instantly started up and gave the alarm. The Esquimaux proceeded with all possible speed to cut a passage though the side of the hut furthest from the sea. Before they could effect this, the surf broke violently over them, and they had barely succeeded in escaping to a slight eminence, when a towering wave swept away the hut and all that was left in it. Thus a second time had the preserving providence of God delivered them. Eventually, too, they were enabled to reach the place of their destination in safety.

Of a different, but no less remarkable cha-

racter, was the escape of a party of Moravian missionaries, labouring in another part of the world. They had penetrated far into the woods, and stopped for the night, after a day of excessive toil, at the hut of a friendly native Indian. Two or three barrels of gunpowder stood in the apartment, and through carelessness in opening them, a portion of their dangerous contents was mingled with the straw which covered the floor of the room. With the usual recklessness of the Indian character, a lighted candle was brought in. David Zeisberger, the leader of the mission band, expostulated with the natives on the danger they thus incurred, but in vain. All he could effect was, a promise that they would use the utmost caution, and not go to sleep till they had extinguished the light. Compelled to be content with this assurance, and overpowered with fatigue, they at length fell asleep. In the morning, Zeisberger called one of the brethren out of the house into the wood, took a piece of candle from his pocket, and said, "My brother, had we not had the eye of Him who never slumbereth nor sleepeth upon us, we should all this night have been precipitated into eternity; and no one would have remained to tell how it happened. I slept



soundly, being extremely fatigued, and was in my first sleep, when I felt as if some one aroused me. I sat up, and saw the wick of the candle hanging down on one side in a flame, and on the very point of falling into the straw. Another moment, and it would have been too late. I could not sleep again, but have lain awake, silently thanking God for the extraordinary preservation we have experienced."

South Africa has subsequently been the scene of Mr. Moffat's well-known missionary toil. His volume is too familiar to the generality of our readers, however, to permit us to do more than quote very partially from its pages. Let it suffice to say, therefore, that it details a career of danger and difficulty singularly illustrative of the care of God.

"It is," says Mr. Moffat himself, "a pleasing, sometimes an exciting exercise, to look back on the rugged path which we have been called to tread, and to recount the dangers from which a gracious Providence has rescued us. Some of these have been so striking that, when I recall the circumstances, I am forcibly impressed with the sentiment that 'man is immortal till his work is done.' On one

journey, when travelling alone in a woody and sequestered place, I left the direct road to avoid a ford where there were many crocodiles. I had not proceeded two stone-casts, when it occurred to me that I should like to examine a projecting rock which lay beyond the path I had left. After examining the object which had attracted my attention, I turned toward the place from whence I had come, in order to retrace my steps, but saw a lion, which had caught scent of me on that spot, looking about for his prey. I, of course, made for the old ford, when, after throwing in some large stones to frighten away the crocodiles, I hastened to the other side, glad enough to get the watery monsters between the lion and myself. The lions, in this part of the country, having once gorged on human flesh, do not spend time in looking at the human eye, which some are said to do, but seek the easiest and most expeditious way of making a meal of a man.

“In one of my early journeys, I had an escape no less providential. I had left the wagons, and wandered to a distance among the coppice and grassy openings in quest of game. I had a small double-barrelled gun on

my shoulder, which was loaded with a ball and small shot. An antelope passed, at which I fired, and slowly followed the course it took. After advancing a short distance, I saw a tiger-cat staring at me between the forked branches of a tree, behind which his long spotted body was concealed, twisting and turning his tail like a cat just going to spring. This I knew was a critical moment, not having a charge of ball in my gun. I moved about as if in search of something in the grass, taking care to retreat at the same time. After getting, as I thought, a suitable distance to turn my back, I moved somewhat more quickly; but in my anxiety to escape what was behind, I did not see what was before, until startled by treading on a large cobra da capello serpent, asleep in the grass. It instantly twirled its body round my leg, on which I had nothing but a thin pair of trousers, when I leaped from the spot, dragging the venomous and enraged reptile with me; and while in the act of throwing itself into a position to bite, without turning round, I threw my piece over my shoulder and shot it. Taking it by the tail, I brought it to my people at the wagons, who, on examining the bags of poison, asserted, that had the

creature bitten me, I could never have reached the wagons. The serpent was six feet long.”\*

It was the parting promise of our Saviour to his disciples—when commanding them to evangelize the world—that his followers should “take up serpents;” and that “if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them.” We have seen, in the above adventure, how singularly the first part of the promise was fulfilled; and a subsequent incident in Mr. Moffat’s life will show how the second portion of it was also exemplified in his eventful career.

“On one occasion,” he writes, “I was

\* This adventure of Mr. Moffat was paralleled, however, by that which occurred to a devoted missionary servant of God, Lewis Christopher Deture, at Panamaribo, in South America. One evening, having been attacked by a paroxysm of fever, he resolved to go into his hut and lie down in a hammock. No sooner, however, had he entered the door, than he found himself in the embrace of a serpent, probably of the boa species, which had suddenly fallen down upon him from the roof. Pursuing him closely, the creature twined itself several times about his neck and head as tightly as possible. Expecting to be strangled or stung to death, and being afraid lest his brethren should suspect the Indians had murdered him, he reached out his arm for a piece of chalk, and with singular presence of mind wrote on the table, “*A serpent has killed me.*” Suddenly the promise of the Redeemer darted into his mind, “They shall take up serpents,”—and they “shall not hurt them.” Nerved with fresh vigour by the power of faith, he seized the creature with immense force, tore it loose from his body, flung it out of his hut, and thus escaped from all further injury.

remarkably preserved when all expected that my race was run. We had reached the river early in the afternoon, after a dreadfully scorching ride across a plain. Three of my companions, who were in advance, rode forward to a Bushman village, on an ascent some hundred yards from the river. I went, because my horse would go to a little pool, on a dry branch from which the flood or torrent had receded to a larger course. Dismounting, I pushed through a narrow opening in the bushes, and, lying down, took a hearty draught. Immediately on raising myself, I felt an unusual taste in my mouth, and looking attentively at the water and temporary fence around it, it flashed across my mind that the water was poisoned for the purpose of killing game.

At that moment a Bushman from the village came running, breathless and apparently terrified, took me by the hand as if to prevent my going to the water, talking with great excitement, though neither I nor my companions could understand him ; but when I made signs that I had drunk, he was speechless for a minute or two, and then ran off to the village. I followed, and on again dismounting, as I was beginning to think, for the last time, the poor

Bushmen and women began to look on me with eyes that bespoke heartfelt compassion. I began to feel a violent turmoil within, and a fulness of the system as if the arteries would break, while the pulsation was exceedingly quick, accompanied with a giddiness in the head. We made the natives understand that we wanted the fruit of the solanum, which acts as an emetic ; they ran in all directions, but sought in vain. By this time I had got into a profuse perspiration, and drank largely of pure water. The strange and painful sensations I had experienced wore away, though they were not entirely removed for several days.

Instances of escape from peril, of an equally remarkable character, could easily be multiplied, did space permit ; for missionary literature abounds with them. The narration of the following incident, however, must conclude this department of our subject.

Mr. Gobat, the present bishop of Jerusalem, when engaged as a missionary in Abyssinia, retired, on one occasion, in a season of deep spiritual depression and gloom, into a cavern, and there poured out his heart in earnest supplication, beseeching that God would not desert him, but encourage him in his trials. He

remained in the cavern for some time. When he rose from his knees, his eyes had become accustomed to the darkness, and he saw that he had been there with a hyæna and her cubs, which yet had marvellously not been permitted to attack him. At the very time when he deemed himself forgotten, he received this striking manifestation that the God of providence was nigh to shield and protect him.

We are not compelled, however, to revert to periods of persecution, or to sweep the missionary field, for evidences of God's parental care of his people. This truth bursts in upon our view at every turn, when we peruse the biographies of those who have devoted themselves to his service, and we are constantly reminded of the saying, that *man is immortal till his work is done*. We have abundant and very striking illustrations of this in the laborious and philanthropic career of John Howard. His whole mature life was one course of perils sought out and encountered in the cause of religion and humanity. On more than one occasion he had himself shut up in the plague-ship, where the pestilence was raging with frightful virulence ; he entered dungeons reeking with miasma, where the jail fever was

sweeping off its hundreds ; he put himself into the hands of the most desperate ruffians, with no defence save "the shield of faith." He shrank from no danger, however fearful, yet he came out from all unhurt. He seemed to bear a charmed life, proof alike against the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the arrow that flieth by day. A thousand fell at his side, and ten thousand at his right hand, but it came not nigh him. He breathed the poisoned air with impunity, and escaped unaffected from the deadliest contagion, for God was with him.

Nor were his perils and escapes all of this kind. It is recorded that once, during a temporary visit to his home, he took occasion to reprove a man in his neighbourhood for his ungodly and profligate life, and warned him of the inevitable consequences of the course he was pursuing. The reproof rankled in the man's heart, and he determined on vengeance. There seemed no difficulty in the way of his gratifying his malignant designs. It was Mr. Howard's invariable custom every Sunday morning to walk alone, across the fields, to a chapel at the distance of two or three miles from his house ; and he resolved to secrete



himself in the path, and spring out upon his unsuspecting reprovcr. But on the very morning fixed upon to accomplish his purpose, Mr. Howard departed from his custom, and rode to chapel, thus escaping the ambush laid for him. Deliverances from the designs of assassination, very similar in character, are recorded in the lives of the great Augustine and of Vavasor Powell, one of the most eminent divines of the seventeenth century.

Powell's illustrious contemporary and friend, the learned and devout Baxter, was on several occasions threatened with similar perils, but he escaped them all. Once, when administering the Lord's supper at Acton, he was fired at through a window just behind him by a ruffian outside, but the ball whizzed close past him, and he escaped unhurt.\*

Baxter records another escape, as having produced a great effect upon his mind. Sitting one day in his library, several of the highest shelves, just over his head, laden with ponderous folios, suddenly broke down, and the huge tomes fell all round him, without however

\* This list of deliverances from assassins might be almost indefinitely extended. Several more are contained in a very interesting volume, published by the Religious Tract Society, entitled "The Life of Thomas Cranfield."

inflicting any injury beyond a slight bruise on the arm : "Whereas the place, the weight, and the greatness of the books was such, that it is a wonder that they had not beaten out my brains," is his own account of the matter. To appreciate the danger and escape of the great theologian, we must remember that the folios in his day were bound in *literal* boards, their corners armed with brass, their backs clamped with iron, so that a blow on the head by one falling from a height would be certain death. A yet narrower escape was experienced by him in the winter of 1633, when, during a severe frost, he was riding from London into Shropshire to see his dying mother. In a very narrow lane he met a loaded wagon, which he could only pass by riding on the top of a high bank by the road side. In spurring his horse up this bank the animal fell, the girths broke, and he was thrown immediately before the wheel of the wagon ; at this critical juncture, the horses suddenly but unaccountably stopped, and his life was preserved. Three or four other escapes as wonderful, and as obviously providential, are recorded in the course of his eventful life.

In Cecil's life is recorded his escape from

injury when a cart-wheel went over his arm. The cause which led to his preservation, was the fact of one of the causeway stones being higher than the others around it, and the wheel in consequence being lifted up by it, passed over Mr. Cecil without crushing him.

In the instances of the preserving care of God already adduced, that care has been exercised on occasions when the danger impending was beheld by his watchful eye alone, and they whose lives were threatened were unconscious of it. But it is in answer to fervent and believing prayer that we are warranted to *expect* deliverances. As to the mode in which prayer is answered without disturbing the natural laws of the world it is unnecessary to speak again, as we have already alluded to the subject in the introduction to this work. His command makes the duty clear, and his promise makes the answer certain; "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." A few illustrative instances will set this truth more clearly and forcibly before us.

Our first illustration will be one of an answer vouchsafed to prayer in its lowest form, if we may so express it—prayer wrung by extreme

danger from lips unaccustomed to utter it, but mercifully listened to by Him who waits to be gracious. The incident is narrated by the rev. H. Cheever, of America. A few years ago, the captain of a whaler cruising in the Pacific despatched two out of his three boats in pursuit of a whale. They were very speedily drawn by it out of sight of the ship. Another whale having been seen, the captain ordered the remaining boat to be lowered, and with the remainder of the crew sprang into it, leaving only a man and two boys in charge of the vessel. Having harpooned this monster of the deep, they were carried by it with fearful velocity to a distance of fifteen miles from where their ship lay. The whale then, wrought into frenzy by the pain of the wound, and his inability to detach himself from the weapon, or shake off his pursuers, rushed upon the boat, struck it in the centre of the keel, dashed it into atoms, plunged into the deep again, and disappeared. The captain and the crew were now in the water, clinging to the scattered fragments of the demolished boat. They were, as we have mentioned, fifteen miles from the ship, and could not be seen from it. The other boats were gone they knew not whither ; every

chance or possibility of escape seemed cut off, and they were left to a watery grave. It was twelve at noon. The hours of one, two, three, four, five, six, passed slowly away, and still they were floating, almost exhausted, upon the heaving billows of the Pacific.

“Oh! how fervently I prayed,” said one of these mariners, when afterwards relating the scene, “that God would in some way providentially interpose and save our lives! I thought of my wife, of my little children, of my prayerless life, of the awful account I had to render at the bar of God for grieving the Spirit and neglecting the Saviour. All the horrors of this dreadful death were forgotten in the thought, that in one short hour I was to render up an account to God for years of ingratitude and disobedience.”

The sun had now disappeared behind the distant waves, and the darkening shades of a dreary night were settling down over the ocean. Just then they descried, dim in the dusky distance, one of the absent boats returning to the ship. It was, however, far off, apparently beyond the reach of their loudest outcries. Impelled by the energies of despair, they simultaneously raised a shout, which blended

with the wash of the waves and the sighing of the breeze ; still, however, the boat continued her course. Again they raised another shout, and it too was unavailing.

The shades of night were deepening, and the boat was rapidly passing by them ; almost frenzied at their terrible condition, they raised another cry. The sound of that distant shriek fell faintly upon the ears of the boatmen, and they rested on their oars. Another shout, which almost lacerated their throats as they uttered it, and the boat turned in pursuit. They were taken nearly lifeless from the water, and carried to the ship. In this very striking narrative, we cannot but observe that the cry was heard in heaven before it was heard on earth. They prayed when there was no helper near save God, and "he inclined unto them, and heard their cry."

Our next illustration will also be drawn from the perils of the deep, but it illustrates another fact besides the efficacy of prayer in gaining deliverance. It shows how prayerful trust in God can give tranquillity and peace in the hour of utmost peril. The incident in question is extracted from a little volume entitled, "God our Refuge," and is the narrative of a home-

ward voyage across the Atlantic by Leonard Strong. It is too long for transcription into our pages, or we would gladly have given it entire. The author being about to sail for England in the steamer "T——," was, in common with the other passengers, startled to hear that the vessel in which they were to embark had been lying for eight days on a reef of rocks off Cuba, by which nearly twenty feet of her keel had been torn away. She had, however, been repaired and pronounced seaworthy. "There was still general consternation among the passengers, and much question as to the safety of proceeding in such a crippled ship. For myself, I felt much perplexity as to my path, and whether I should construe this as a providential hindrance to delay my voyage, or simply an occasion for the exercise of faith in God for special preservation. Giving myself to prayer, I felt a calm persuasion in my mind that all was well, and ordered for our good and his glory." This was no wild presumption on the part of the writer, for so secure was the steamer now considered that a valuable freight of silver and pearls was placed on board of it.

It appeared that the rent in the vessel's keel had been repaired by a water-tight deck being

laid over the wounded part, and that powerful pumps had been fitted up and connected with the steam-engine, so that should any leakage occur the water could be carried off as fast as it flowed in. With these precautions it was confidently asserted that the ship was fit to sail for China, and to encounter any weather. Nevertheless, as it subsequently turned out, all that could be truly said for her was, that so long as the engine and pumps worked, she would float; but that within four hours of either of them failing she would fill and go down. For many days, however, all went well. The vessel seemed to make her way so gallantly through the waves that fear subsided in the breasts of those on board, and admiration of her swift and majestic advance toward her "desired haven" took its place.

On the ninth day of the voyage a brisk gale came on, which continued to increase. Still the confidence of the officers of the ship remained unshaken, and they expressed their readiness to sail for China in her if needful. As the gale freshened, however, she began to labour heavily, which caused the false keel to leak. Seen afterward the leak began to increase fearfully, the water to rise in the hold,



and the pumps almost entirely to cease acting. The fact was, the pipes had become choked, and the engines were working very feebly. In consequence of this the water soon rose nearly to the orlop deck, and, as the ship reeled to and fro with each sea that struck her, roared and dashed in the hold like the surf on a rocky beach. Now, however, appeared the value of faith and prayer. Mr. Strong, finding that he could be of no use on deck, repaired to his cabin, and poured out his soul in supplication to Him "who hath gathered the wind in his fists, and hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand." He was led especially to pray on behalf of the many on board who were unprepared to die, and he besought the Lord for their sakes to spare the ship, that the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering might lead them to repentance. He then returned on deck, with a calm and untroubled spirit, firmly trusting in God, and freed from all anxiety as to the result. "My peace and joy in the Lord," he says, "were never disturbed a moment."

He found the crew actively engaged in preparing for the worst, getting the boat ready to launch before the ship should go down. The sea, however, was running so high that it was

a question whether they could live in it. It was now resolved to make one more effort to discover and remove the cause of the pumps failing; and, as a last resort, a diver was sent down under the ship's bottom to clear the pipe of any accumulation of seaweed or oakum he might find there, the passengers meanwhile working a hand-pump and baling with buckets. This was continued from nine o'clock till one. "It was an awful season. When my turn was to rest I went to the ladies; they were exceedingly terrified; and you might see those who had been so thoughtlessly gay the day before, in an agony of mind. I then showed them the value of saving faith in Jesus, and besought them now to look with confidence to his blood, and cast themselves on the grace of God.

"The preparations for embarking in the boats had greatly alarmed the ladies, and it was a pitiful sight to behold their agony at the prospect before them; for, perhaps, ere sunset the mighty vessel, with all the souls on board, might sink beneath the waters, and the wind might be sweeping over the waves that covered us, and not a token be left to tell our mourning friends the sad tale of our foundering at sea; and, then, the souls of those who had not been

washed in the blood of Jesus—where would they be? *All this, ay, more than this, was pondered in the heart of Him whose name is 'love.'*

“The time was now come for Him who had heard my cry to put forth his hand. The men had been fruitlessly diving for three hours and a half, and the water fearfully increasing, notwithstanding all our efforts; but now they succeeded in clearing the pipe, the water began to decrease, and in a short time we were able to discontinue pumping or baling, the engine taking off all the water. By four o'clock our fears were quieted, and we were all able to assemble at dinner. Then were the circumstances of Paul and the crew of the ship of Alexandria brought forcibly before my mind; so confident did I feel that God had answered prayer, in helping us to clear the engine-pipes, and had given calmness and wisdom to the engineer to act as he had done for our safety. All thought of danger was now banished from my mind, and although the vessel was rolling deeply before a heavy sea, yet she was running swiftly to a port of safety.”

Thus it proved, and they succeeded in reaching Fayal, where the steamer was thoroughly examined and repaired. Many of the passen-

gers, however, refused to proceed further in her; but so strongly impressed was the captain by Mr. Strong's calm trust in Providence in the hour of peril, that he earnestly besought him to remain in the ship till her arrival in England, feeling assured that, if he did so it would safely arrive at its place of destination. His confidence was not misplaced; the steamer reached England without further disaster.

In the memoirs of the rev. Legh Richmond, the pious author of the *Dairyman's Daughter*, a striking proof is recorded, that "the fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much," and that it can draw down protection for the object of its solicitude at a time when he is far removed from all personal communication with those who are most deeply interested in his welfare.

Nugent Richmond, the son of the clergyman whom we have just named, was the child of many prayers, and received a careful and a pious education. When a young man, however, he occasioned his father much anxiety by a course of irregularity, and was, after ineffectual attempts to restrain him, sent to the sea as his profession. His father followed him with much earnest prayer, and besought God

earnestly for his preservation and reformation. In the midst of his parental anxieties, however, intelligence of an appalling character reached him: the "Arniston," the ship in which his son had sailed, had been wrecked near Cape Lagullas, with the loss of her whole crew, consisting of three hundred and fifty persons. The news plunged Mr. Richmond and his family into deep affliction, and the father sorrowed for his child, with a grief unmitigated by the communication of any cheering circumstance as to the state of his mind, or his fitness for so sudden a change.

But mark the power of prayer. In the following winter, while he was still wearing mourning apparel for his son, a letter was delivered to Mr. Richmond, in the handwriting of the very son whom he sorrowed over as being dead, explaining that circumstances had prevented him from setting sail in the "Arniston" on her return voyage. Thus miraculously was he alone, of all that large crew, preserved. The life thus saved was devoted to God; and Nugent Richmond, after living for some years a monument of the preserving goodness of Providence, died, there is reason to believe, a holy and a happy believer in the Saviour.

The efficacy of prayer in warding off perils has been experienced by communities as well as by individuals. To trace out the various instances in which the fervent prayers of Christians could be shown to have exerted a mighty influence upon the destinies of nations, would require more space than our pages will permit ; nor is it needful that we should do this, since there are so many volumes extant devoted to the special purpose of tracing the hand of God in history. He must surely be grossly ignorant, or wilfully blind, who does not see the providential answers to prayer in such events as the destruction of the Spanish Armada, or the scattering of the fleet drawn up to oppose the landing of William III.

The following somewhat similar incident is recorded by the sober-minded and judicious president Dwight, in a sermon on the efficacy of prayer : “ I am bound,” he says, “ as an inhabitant of New England, solemnly to declare, that were there no other instances to be found in any other country, the blessings communicated to this would furnish ample satisfaction to every sober, much more to every religious mind. Among these the destruction of the French armament under the duc D’Anville, in the year

1746, ought to be remembered with gratitude and admiration by every inhabitant of this country. This fleet consisted of forty ships of war, was destined for the destruction of New England, was of sufficient force to render that destruction in the ordinary progress of things certain, sailed from Chebucto in Nova Scotia for this purpose, and was entirely destroyed by a terrible tempest on the night following a general fast throughout New England. Impious men, who 'regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands,' may refuse to give God the glory of this most merciful interposition. But our ancestors had, and it is to be hoped their descendants ever will have, both piety and good sense sufficient to ascribe to Jehovah 'the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory;' and to 'bless the Lord their God for ever and ever.' "

But deliverances to a community, or to an individual exposed to peril of death, do not compose the limits of God's providential interference. In every time of trial, small or great, the Christian is privileged to make known his wants unto God. Striking evidence of the truth of this promise is given in the memoirs of Mr. Meikle, a pious surgeon at Carnwarth, in Scot-

land. In the middle of the last century, Mr. Meikle, who was at that time an assistant surgeon in the navy, accompanied the British fleet to Leghorn. While it lay there, he paid a visit to the leaning tower of Pisa; but, on his return, discovered with consternation that during his absence the wind had changed and the fleet had sailed, the latter being already several leagues on its voyage. He was now in a strange place, ignorant of the language, with little money, without one personal acquaintance, and in danger, from his absence, of losing his appointment, as well as injuring his professional prospects. In his distress he applied to the English consul, but every expedient suggested by him failed. Mr. Meikle, however, was a man of deep and unfeigned piety, and had known from previous experience the value and power of prayer. After spending, therefore, the whole of Friday and Saturday in fruitless contrivances to extricate himself from the embarrassments of his situation, he walked to a field in the neighbourhood of Leghorn, and occupied the sabbath in devotional exercises, pouring out his complaint before God. With a mind much calmed by this employment he returned home, and had scarcely reached it



before the surprising intelligence came that *the English fleet had arrived in the roads, having been driven back by a change of wind*. With joy he rejoined his vessel, blessing God for a deliverance so manifestly providential, and—fanatical as the expression may appear to the worldling—so evidently an answer to prayer. His rescue appears even to have struck the thoughtless sailors in his ship with surprise; for, says his biographer, “they hailed him as he approached the vessel in their rough and irreligious manner—‘Come along, you praying ——;’ adding, that the winds would not permit them to leave Leghorn without him.”

In the deliverances in answer to prayer which have been already recorded, the exigency, however formidable, has yet afforded opportunity for deliberation, and allowed of calm, continuous waiting upon God. But in other cases the peril has been so sudden and startling as to leave no time for reflection as to the course best to be pursued, and only admitted of a few brief and hasty ejaculations to God for help in the emergency. As Nehemiah, when standing before the monarch of Babylon, breathed a prayer which was heard in heaven, and answered on the instant, so for our encouragement

there are on record many instances which have occurred in our own times, proving that God's ear is not grown heavy that he cannot hear, neither is his arm shortened that he cannot save. The history of Mr. Cecil, whose escapes in childhood have already been referred to, affords a case in point.

"About the year 1778," says his biographer, "Mr. Cecil was appointed to two small livings at Lewes, in Sussex. At this time a very singular providence occurred to him on his way from London to serve these churches. He was detained in town till noon, in consequence of which he did not arrive on East Grinstead common till after it was dark. On this common he met a man on horseback, who appeared to be intoxicated, and ready to fall from his horse. Mr. C., with his usual benevolence, rode up to him in order to prevent his falling, when the man immediately seized the reins of his horse. Mr. C., perceiving that he was in bad hands, endeavoured to break away, but the man threatened to knock him down if he repeated the attempt. Three other men immediately rode up, placing Mr. C. in the midst of them. On perceiving his danger, it struck him, "Here is an occasion of faith;" and that direction occurred to him, "Call

upon me in the day of trouble : I will deliver thee." He secretly lifted up his heart to God, imploring that deliverance which he alone could give. One of the men, who seemed to be captain of the gang, asked him who he was, and whither he was going. Mr. C. told them very frankly his name and profession. The leader said, " Sir, I know you, and have heard you preach at Lewes : let the gentleman's horse go ; we wish you good night." Mr. Cecil had about him 16*l.* of queen Anne's bounty belonging to his churches, which he had been to London to receive, and the loss of which would have been to him at that time a large sum ; yet his person and property were alike untouched.

An incident in the early life of Thomas Burchell, a devoted and successful missionary to the West Indies, is even more striking than that just mentioned.

Mr. Burchell was in early life a cloth manufacturer in the west of England. His first piece of cloth he sold to a person in Bristol, who, a few days afterwards, was reported to be on the point of insolvency. With the energy which characterized him throughout his whole life, he determined, if possible, to regain legal possession of his property, of which it ap-

peared he was about to be defrauded. It occurred to him, that by walking all night he should be in Bristol some hours earlier than if he waited for the coach, which did not start till morning. He therefore set out at once, and had walked nearly twenty miles by daybreak. He now approached the Severn, at a point where he expected to find some one who would ferry him over. As he reached it, he saw a boat push off hastily from the land. He hailed the crew, but they only plied their oars more vigorously, and were soon out of hearing.

Looking round he saw another boat just putting out, and feeling that if he did not succeed in gaining a passage in her, he should fail of attaining the object for which he had made such efforts, he used all the means in his power to attract the attention of the boatmen and induce them to return. It soon became evident that they had noticed him, and seemed debating whether they should return or not. He at length had the satisfaction of seeing them pull for the shore. As they approached, it struck him that he had never seen five such desperate looking ruffians. After some objection on their part, they told him to get in. He had not long done so before he found that he

was in most undesirable company. 'They began whispering together, and the few words he caught showed him that he was in extreme peril. He then perceived that they were steering in the opposite direction to that in which he wished to go. He spoke to them of this, when one of the number, an Irishman, openly and resolutely avowed their design of murdering him. They all then set up a loud shout in confirmation of their purpose, and as though to urge one another on to the deed.

From their horrid oaths and avowed intentions he now found that they took him for a spy in the preventive service, and he perceived some kegs of spirits covered with straw in the bottom of the boat. It was in vain he assured them that they were mistaken in their suspicions; they only renewed their imprecations and threats of immediate and signal vengeance. Finding that they scoffed at his protestations, he ceased, and began to speak with them of God, a judgment, and eternity. After speaking in this strain for some little while, he observed the countenance of one of them to relax, and a tremor to pass over the frame of another. Still they did not alter the boat's course, but continued steadily rowing in the wrong direction.

He then addressed each one solemnly and separately, and this with so much evident sincerity and deep feeling, that the captain of the crew cried out, "I say, I can't stand this. I don't believe he's the man we took him for. We must let him go. Where do you want to be put out, sir?" The traveller replied that he wished to be taken up the Avon as far as Bristol. The man said that they could not go so far as that, as they dared not pass Pill; but that they would take him as far as possible, and put him in a way to continue his journey by the shortest route. He thanked them, and begged them to make the utmost speed, for his business was urgent. Finding them so subdued, he spoke to them of their sinful lives, and pointed them to Christ as their Saviour. They all appeared impressed by his statements and conduct, and not only refused to receive what he had stipulated to pay as fare, but offered to forward a keg of spirits to any place he would mention—an offer which was of course declined. On landing, one of the men accompanied him to a farm-house, and induced the occupant to drive him to Bristol. He, by these means, succeeded in reaching his journey's end at an early hour, and in

regaining possession of the greater part of his property.

Even had the results of this perilous boat voyage stopped here, it would have afforded a striking instance of the blessings which attend Christian fidelity and boldness, springing from a sense of God's presence and access to him in prayer. But more remains to be told. Many years afterwards, on Mr. Burchell's return from Jamaica, he was at a small village in the neighbourhood of Cheddar Cliffs, when a man accosted him, offered his hand, and appeared surprised that he was not recognised. It proved to be the smuggler who had guided Mr. Burchell to the farm-house. After some conversation, he said, "Ah! sir, after your talk we none of us could follow that trade again. I have since learned to be a carpenter, and am doing very well in this village; and attend a chapel three or four miles off. And our poor captain never forgot to pray for you till his dying day. He was quite an altered man, took his widowed mother to live with him, and became a good husband, a good father, and a good neighbour. Before, every one was afraid of him, he was such a desperate fellow; afterwards he was as tame as a lamb. He opened a little shop for the maintenance of

his family ; and what was better still, held prayer meetings in his house. The other three men are now in a merchant vessel, and are very steady and well behaved."

Interesting, and even romantic, as were these adventures of Mr. Burchell and Mr. Cecil, they are more than paralleled by an event which occurred during the missionary voyage of Messrs. Tyerman and Bennett, to which reference was made in the previous chapter. They had arrived after many perils at New Zealand ; an island which had not then come under the civilizing power of the gospel. A few missionaries, however, were sowing the precious seed of which the present generation are reaping the fruits. The natives were almost to a man cannibals, and were the dread of sailors navigating those seas, from their deeds of ferocious cruelty against the crews who were so unhappy as to fall into their hands. It was among these fierce savages that the incident happened, of which the following is an abridged account:—

"This morning," says Mr. Bennett, "our little vessel was surrounded by canoes containing several hundred natives. The commerce went on pretty well for some time, till they



began to exercise their pilfering propensities, and speedily, without our perceiving the immediate reason, the whole scene was changed. The women and children in the course of a few seconds had all disappeared, leaping overboard into the canoes, and taking with them the mantles of the warriors. The latter thus stripped for action remained on deck, of which they took complete possession, and forthwith made us their prisoners." Tremendous were their howlings and screechings, whilst they stamped and brandished their weapons. One chief with his slaves surrounded the captain on the larboard quarter. Mr. Tyerman under guard of another band stood on the starboard, and Mr. Bennett was beside him. A chief now addressed the latter gentleman with a series of wild, furious questions, to which Mr. B. contrived to return a soothing answer. At that moment a slave stepped behind Mr. Bennett and pinioned both his arms; he, however, made no attempt to resist or elude the attack of the gigantic savage, knowing that to do so would only accelerate the threatened destruction. Another slave then raised a large axe over the head of the prisoner, looking with demon-like eagerness and impatience to his master for the

signal to strike. While Mr. Bennett stood thus pinioned and in jeopardy, the axe gleaming over his head and catching his eye at every turn, he saw a few yards before him Mr. Tyerman in custody of other slaves. The savages were from time to time feeling his limbs in eager anticipation of the cannibal feast which awaited them. The prisoner, like his companion, maintained the utmost calmness of deportment, though the paleness of his countenance plainly showed that he was not ignorant of the meaning of these familiarities.

This scene of terror and confusion—during which the cannibals never ceased to rage and threaten destruction, which an invisible and almighty Hand stayed them from executing—lasted for about two hours. “I recommended my spirit,” says Mr. Bennett, “to the mercy of God, in whose presence I doubted not I should very soon appear.” But the prayers breathed in that season of peril and terror had entered the ears of the Lord God Almighty. He had restrained the rage of the savages during the long period that they held possession of the ship, and now he sent deliverance as unexpected as the danger had been sudden. Several voices cried out from different

parts of the vessel, "A boat! a boat!" Happily it was a boat returning from the settlement in Wangaroa Bay. In it were Mr. White, a Wesleyan missionary, and the principal chief of that part of the island. The natives immediately desisted from violence, and the prisoners were released from their terrible position. How fervently they adored God, whose arm had been so marvellously stretched for their deliverance, and who had so signally heard and answered their prayers, may be more easily conceived than described.

When assailed by sudden and startling dangers like those just recorded, there is no natural quality more valuable than presence of mind, meaning by that term, the habit of looking calmly at the peril to which we are exposed, and instead of being paralyzed by excitement, coolly surveying all the attendant circumstances, so as to avail ourselves of any mode of escape which may offer. "The value of presence of mind on occasions of peril involving many lives," says an essayist on this subject, "has rarely been more strikingly exemplified than in the circumstances attending the burning of the Kent East Indiaman by fire, when, though the ship was crowded by

troops with their families, and though it was known that there was a large quantity of powder in the magazine, yet not a cry of alarm was heard even from the women and children ; the consequence of which was, that the officers and crew were able to do all that was needful, and to transmit the whole of her living freight to a vessel which most providentially came in sight at the time. In striking contrast was the scene on board the Halsewell, where the daughters of the captain, losing all self-control, threw themselves upon their father with such frantic cries as entirely to unman him, and deprive him of that calmness and intrepidity, on the maintenance of which all depended." It is recorded of the late duke of Wellington, that no feature of his character was more remarkable than his coolness in the hour of danger. Instead of becoming paralyzed or perturbed by sudden and perilous conjunctures, he seemed to rise up to each emergency, so that the more imminent the danger, the quicker were his perceptions, the cooler his judgment, and the firmer his resolve. Much of this invaluable capacity is, of course, a natural gift, but it is still very susceptible of development and culture. Where young persons are accus-

tomed to make a clamour about trifles, to give way to the first impulses of terror, or to affect alarm at frivolous causes, this quality can scarcely be expected to survive. But let the young be taught to cultivate a calm, tranquil spirit, and to maintain a firm, fearless deportment under such circumstances, and they will be prepared to meet, and, as far as human agency can go, to escape from the real and important perils which may threaten their riper years. We need hardly remark, how pre-eminently true religious principle is adapted to implant and foster this habit of mind, giving as it does faith in a presiding Providence, stripping death of its terrors, and accustoming the individual to contemplate with serenity an opening eternity. Others may rush upon death with a callous insensibility arising from indifference to the future life, but the Christian, who by a living faith is victor over death, is alone able to encounter the king of terrors with a calm, rational confidence.

We subjoin a few instances of presence of mind exhibited by persons of both these classes.

No man, perhaps, was ever naturally gifted in greater perfection with the quality now under consideration than Napoleon Bonaparte. In

the hour of danger his coolness was so remarkable, that "calm as on the morning of a great battle," was the phrase employed by those who knew him best, when they wished to describe his appearance on any occasion in civil life upon which he had manifested peculiar self-possession. In one period of his eventful career, Napoleon was especially indebted to this valuable quality for his preservation. During his residence in Egypt, he had had occasion, with some attendants, to cross some sands at low tide ; night set in while they were thus engaged ; the tide set in ; and having lost their way the party came to a full pause. Not knowing on which side the water was shallow or on which it was deep, they could not tell whether the next step would take them nearer to or further from the shore. At this juncture, Napoleon relieved the whole party by one of those happy strokes of genius, which, however, but for presence of mind would never have occurred to him. Ordering his attendants to form a circle around him, he then instructed each of them to gallop forward, pausing when their horses began to swim. In this manner some of the party speedily found out where the water, in the direction of the shore, began to grow shallow, and all escaped in safety. "Had

I perished here, like Pharaoh," said Napoleon, with the hardened sneer of infidelity, "what a famous text it would have proved to half the divines of Europe."

The value of presence of mind, united with unflinching nerve and courage, was also powerfully displayed in private life some forty years since by sir John Purcell, at a time when his house was attacked by fourteen assassins. The subjoined narrative\* is drawn from sir John's own statement, as given in a court of justice.

Sir John Purcell, at the time the adventure occurred, was residing at Highfort, in Ireland, when, on the 11th of March, 1812, after he had retired to rest, he heard some noise outside the window of his parlour. He slept on the ground floor, in a room immediately adjoining the parlour. There was a door from one room into the other, but this having been found inconvenient, and there being another passage from the bed-room more commodious, it was nailed up, and some of the furniture of the parlour placed against it. Shortly after sir John heard the noise in the front of his house, the windows of his parlour were dashed in, and

\* See Chambers' Edinburgh Journal, vol. vi. first series.

the noise occasioned by the feet of the robbers in leaping from the windows down into the parlour, appeared to indicate a gang not less than fourteen in number. He immediately got out of bed, and the first determination he took being to make resistance, it was with no small mortification that he reflected upon the unarmed condition in which he was placed, being destitute of a single weapon of the ordinary sort. In this state he spent little time in deliberation, as it almost immediately occurred to him, that having supped in the bedchamber on that night, a knife had been left there, and he instantly proceeded to grope in the dark for the weapon, which he found before the door leading from the parlour into the bedchamber had been broken open. While he stood in calm but resolute expectation that the progress of the robbers would soon lead them to the bedchamber, he heard the furniture which had been placed against the nailed-up door expeditiously displaced, and immediately afterwards the door was burst open. The moon shone with great brightness, and when the door was thrown open, the light streaming in through three large windows in the parlour afforded sir John a view which might have made



a less intrepid spirit, or one possessing less presence of mind, not a little apprehensive. His bedroom was darkened to excess in consequence of the shutters of the windows, as well as the curtains being closed; and thus, while he stood enveloped in darkness, he saw standing before him, by the brightness of the moonlight, a body of men well armed; and of those who were in the van of the gang, he observed that the faces of a few were blackened. Armed only with the table knife, and with no human aid but a dauntless heart, he took his station by the side of the door, and in a moment after one of the ruffians entered from the parlour into the dark room. Instantly upon advancing, sir John struck him with his weapon. Upon receiving this thrust the marauder retired into the back parlour, crying out with blasphemous expressions that he was killed. Shortly after another advanced, who was received in a similar manner, and he also staggered back into the parlour, crying out that he was wounded. A voice from the outside now gave orders to fire into the dark room, upon which a man stepped forward, having a short gun in his hand. As he stood in the act to fire, sir John had the amazing coolness and presence of mind to look

at his intended murderer, and without betraying any audible emotion that might point out where he was standing, he calmly calculated his own safety from the shot which was preparing for him. He saw that the contents of the piece were likely to pass close to his breast without menacing him with at least any serious wound, and in this state of firm and composed expectation he stood without flinching until the piece was fired, and its contents harmlessly lodged in the wall. It was loaded with a brace of bullets and three slugs. As soon as the robber had fired, sir John made a pass at him with the knife and wounded him in the arm, which in a moment he repeated with similar effect: as the others had done, the man retired, exclaiming that he was wounded. The robbers immediately rushed forward from the parlour into the dark room, and then it was that sir John's mind recognised the deepest sense of danger, not to be oppressed, however, by it, but to surmount it. He did not lose a moment after the ruffians had entered the room, but struck at one of them and wounded him, receiving however a blow on the head, and finding himself grappled with. Sir John and his adversary both fell, and while they

were on the ground, sir John thinking that his thrusts with the knife did not seem to produce the effect which they had done in the beginning of the conflict, examined the point of his weapon with his finger, and found that the blade of it had bent near the point. As he lay struggling on the ground, he endeavoured, but unsuccessfully, to straighten the curvature of the knife; but while one hand was employed in this attempt, he perceived that the grasp of his adversary was losing its constraint and pressure; the limbs of the robber were, in fact, by this time unnerved in death. Sir John found that the man had a sword in his hand, and this he immediately seized and gave several blows with it, his knife being no longer serviceable. At length the robbers finding that so many of their party had been killed or wounded, employed themselves in removing the bodies, and sir John took the opportunity of retiring a little apart from the house, where he remained for a short time. He afterwards ventured to call for assistance, and some of the ruffians were speedily traced and brought to justice. During the whole of the appalling scene, sir John's presence of mind had never forsaken him, and to this quality he largely, under God,

owed his preservation on that memorable night.

Admirable as was the self-possession shown by sir John Purcell, no reference is made to religious principle as having been its source and spring. Scenes, too, of blood, even when it has been shed in self-defence, leave a painful impression on the mind. Some incidents of a more pleasing character come now, however, to be noticed.

Rarely has there been a more striking instance of heroism, calmness, and presence of mind, inspired and sustained by Christian faith, than in the conduct of a peasant's wife in the Peak of Derbyshire, quoted by Howitt on the authority of a minister of the Society of Friends, who was personally acquainted with the facts of the case. It is likewise recorded by Wilson Armistead, in a volume published with the sanction of the same body. We give it in an abridged form.

In one of the thinly peopled dales of the Peak of Derbyshire stood a lone house, far from neighbours, inhabited by a farmer and his wife. Such is, or at least was wont to be, the primitive simplicity of this district, that it was usual for persons to go to bed without

taking any precautions to bolt or bar the doors, in the event of any of the inmates not having come home at the usual hour of retiring to rest. This was frequently the practice with the family in question, especially on market-days, when the farmer having occasion to go to the nearest town, often did not return until late. One evening, when the husband was absent, the wife, being up stairs, heard some one open the door and enter the house. Supposing it to be her husband she lay awake, expecting him to come up stairs. As the usual time elapsed and he did not come, she rose and went down, when, to her terror and astonishment, she saw a sturdy fellow searching the house for plunder. At the first view of him, as she afterwards said, she felt ready to drop; but being naturally courageous, and of a deeply religious disposition, she soon recovered sufficient self-possession to suppress the cry which was rising to her lips, to walk with apparent firmness to a chair which stood on one side of the fire-place, and seat herself in it. The marauder immediately seated himself in another chair, which stood opposite, and fixed his eyes upon her with a most savage expression. Her courage was almost spent; but

recollecting herself, she put up a prayer to the Almighty for protection, and threw herself upon his providence, for "vain was the help of man." She immediately felt her courage revive, and looked stedfastly at the ruffian, who now drew a large claspknife from his pocket, opened it, and, with a murderous expression in his eyes, appeared ready to spring upon her. She, however, showed no visible emotion, but continued to pray earnestly, and to look on the man with calm seriousness. He rose, glanced first at her, then at the knife; again he seemed to hesitate, and wiped the weapon upon his hand; then once more glanced at her, she all the while continuing to sit calmly, calling earnestly upon God. Suddenly a panic appeared to seize him; he blenched beneath her still, fixed gaze, closed his knife, and went out. At a single spring she reached the door, shot the bolt with a convulsive rapidity, and fell senseless on the floor. When she recovered, she recognised her husband's well-known step at the door, and heard him calling out in surprise at finding it fastened. Rising, she admitted him, and in tones tremulous with agitation and gratitude, told him of her danger and deliverance.

The life of sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, so distinguished for natural courage and strong religious faith, affords many instances of presence of mind in danger, fearlessness in the discharge of duty, and providential deliverance from imminent peril. The following incident is taken from a letter written by himself to his wife :—

“As you must hear,” he says, “the story of our dog Prince, I may as well tell it you. On Thursday morning, when I got on my horse at S. Hoare’s, David told me that there was something the matter with Prince, that he had killed the cat, and almost killed the new dog, and had bit at him and Elizabeth. I ordered him to be tied up and taken care of, and then rode off to town. When I got into Hampstead, I saw Prince covered with mud and running furiously, and biting at everything. I saw him bite at least a dozen dogs, two boys, and a man.

“Of course I was exceedingly alarmed, being persuaded he was mad. I tried either to stop him or kill him, or to drive him into some out-house, but in vain. At last he sprang up at a boy, and seized him by the breast; happily I was near him, and knocked him off with my whip. He then set off toward London, and I

rode by his side waiting for some opportunity of stopping him. I continually spoke to him, but he paid no regard to coaxing or scolding. You may suppose I was seriously alarmed, dreading the immense mischief he might do, having seen him do so much in the few preceding minutes. I was terrified at the idea of his getting into Camden Town and London; and at length, considering that if ever there was an occasion that justified a risk of life, this was it, I determined to catch him myself. Happily he ran up to Prior's Gate, and I threw myself from my horse upon him, and caught him by the neck; he bit at me and struggled, but without effect, and I succeeded in securing him. He died yesterday raving mad.

"Was there ever a more merciful escape? Think of the children being gone! I feel it most seriously, but I cannot write about it more fully. I have not been at all nervous about it, though certainly rather low, partly about this and partly about other things."

Some time afterwards he gave the particulars more in detail than he could do in the hurried letter, written immediately after the event. They show how frightful was the peril he had encountered:—



“When I seized the dog, his struggles were so desperate that it seemed at first impossible for me to hold him, till I lifted him up in the air, when he was more easily managed, and I contrived to ring the bell. I was afraid that the foam, which was pouring from his mouth in his furious efforts to bite me, might get into some scratch, and do me injury; so, with great difficulty, I held him with one hand, while I put the other into my pocket and forced on my glove; then I did the same with my other hand, and at last the gardener opened the door, saying, ‘What do you want?’ ‘I’ve brought you a mad dog,’ replied I; and telling him to get a strong chain, I walked into the yard, carrying the dog by the neck. I was determined not to kill him, as I thought if he should prove not to be mad, it would be such a satisfaction to the three persons he had bitten. I made the gardener (who was in a terrible fright) secure the collar round his neck, and fix the other end of the chain to a tree, and walking to its furthest range, with all my force, which was exhausted by his frantic struggles, I flung him away from me and sprang back. He made a desperate bound at me, but finding himself foiled, he uttered the most fearful yell I ever heard. All

that day he did nothing but rush to and fro, champing the foam which gushed from his jaws; we threw him meat, and he snatched at it with fury, but instantly dropped it again. The next day when I went to see him, I thought the chain seemed worn, so I pinned him to the ground between the prongs of a pitchfork, and then fixed a much larger chain round his neck; when I pulled off the fork, he sprang up and made a dash at me, *which snapped the old chain in two.*

“What a terrible business it was! You must not scold me for the risk I ran; what I did, I did from a clear conviction that it was my duty, and I never can think that an over-cautious care of self, in circumstances where your risk may preserve others, is so great a virtue as you seem to think it.”

Heroic as Buxton's conduct was, it will probably, in the judgment of our readers, be considered to have been surpassed by the following incident, in which presence of mind, true heroism, self-devotion, resignation to the Divine will, (answered by a signal deliverance from danger,) all meet in one noble cluster. The narration of it will appropriately close a chapter, dedicated to illustrations of the sustaining

power of faith and prayer in the season of peril.

A poor miner in Cornwall was down with another miner sinking a shaft. In pursuit of that obscure labour they were blasting the solid rock. They had placed in the rock a large charge of powder, and fixed their fusee so that it could not be extricated. Their proper course was to cut the fusee with a knife; then one should ascend in their bucket, the other wait till their bucket came down again; then get into it, ignite the fusees, give the signal, and so be at the top of the shaft before the explosion. In the present case, however, they negligently cut the fusee with a stone and a blunt iron instrument. Fire was struck; the fusee was hissing; they both dashed to the bucket and gave the signal. The man above attempted in vain to move the windlass. One could escape; both could not, and delay was death to both. Our miner looked for a moment at his comrade, and slipping from the bucket, said, "Escape! I shall be in heaven in a minute." The bucket sped up the shaft. The man was safe; eager to watch the fate of his deliverer, he bent to hear. Just then the explosion rumbled below; a splinter came up

the shaft and struck him on the brow. They soon began to burrow among the fallen rock to extricate the corpse. At last they heard a voice. Their friend was yet alive ! They reached him ; the pieces of rock had roofed him over : he was without injury or scratch. All he could tell was, that at the moment his friend was gone he sat down, lifted a piece of rock, and held it before his eyes. When asked what induced him to let the other escape, he replied, " I knew *my* soul was safe—I was not so sure about *his*." " I look," adds the writer who narrates this incident, " I look at Peter the Great, who, to build a city called by his own name, sacrificed a hundred thousand men ; and at this poor miner, who, to save the soul of his comrade, sat there to be blasted to pieces ; and I ask you which of the two is the hero ?"\*

Such are some of the illustrations which manifest the watchful care of God over his children, the tenderness with which he hears and answers their prayers, and the sustaining power which faith affords in the hour of danger.

\* From a lecture on "Heroes," by the rev. W. Arthur, delivered before the Young Men's Christian Association. Mr. Arthur states, that a friend of his was intimately acquainted with the individual who performed the heroic act in question.

## CHAPTER III.

## PROVIDENTIAL DELIVERANCES FROM DANGER BY INSTRUMENTALITIES OF A REMARKABLE CHARACTER.

THE remarkable facts given in the preceding chapter must impress every dispassionate mind with the conviction that God does indeed, by his providence, watch over the world which he has created ; that he is not far removed from any one of us, and that he is able to deliver to the uttermost those who put their trust in him. As we advance, however, in the prosecution of the subject, our wonder is raised to a still higher point when we perceive the varied instrumentalities by which the moral Governor of the universe works out the counsels of his holy will ; and we are constrained, in the survey, to exclaim with the apostle of old, " Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ! "

It is proposed in the present chapter to

record some incidents by which the sceptical mode of accounting for deliverances from danger, by ascribing them to chance, will seem still more unreasonable—cases in which the mode of rescue was such as to point decisively to the agency of a hidden and more than mortal power, and to imply a knowledge of futurity, as well as an access to, and control over, the thoughts and feelings of the mind, on the part of some invisible agent. The recorded and attested instances, it will be found, are numerous, in which thoughts have occurred to the waking or sleeping mind, prompting to measures of precaution, when no danger was visible or previously apprehended. Very frequently, too, the inferior animals will be seen to have acted as the instruments of deliverance, some influence having been exerted upon them, or their blind instinct having been mysteriously overruled and guided. In these cases it seems scarcely possible to avoid the acknowledgment of a Divine Providence anticipating and warding off peril, whilst the person whose life was endangered was as yet ignorant of what was impending.

The Bible contains many instances of the nature alluded to. The patriarch Abraham

goes down into Egypt ; his faith fails him, but Abimelech is warned in a dream against doing injury to him. Laban is about to proceed to severities against Jacob, but is prevented by a dream. Pharaoh is warned, through the same medium, of an approaching famine, and the result is that Joseph is raised from the dungeon to power, and thousands are kept alive by the precautions adopted. The prophet, to escape from the rage of his royal persecutor, flies into the wilderness, and there the ravens bring him food morning and evening. Daniel is thrown among wild beasts, but finds that their fierce instincts are restrained or suspended. Ahasuerus one night cannot sleep—a circumstance so trivial as apparently not to be worth noticing ; he summons the scribes and commands them to read the chronicles of his reign. Mordecai is thereupon raised to honour, and enabled to assist in the rescue of his nation from an impending massacre. These instances belonged, it is true, to a dispensation confessedly miraculous ; but even in our own day events are found to have occurred bearing a strong parallel to them. Whatever theory we may form as to the origin of incidents of this character, whether we ascribe them to the opera-

tion of ordinary natural laws, or to the direct action of a supernatural Power, still the finger of God must equally be recognised by every candid mind as having overruled them to accomplish his providential purposes.

The phenomenon of dreams, for example, has been a fertile subject for discussion. Undoubtedly dreams, in the generality of instances, must be regarded as nothing more than new combinations of previously existing ideas—reflections of the past, rather than intimations of the future. Whatever be their origin, however, they have unquestionably, as will be proved by the following example, been the means, even in modern times, of conveying warnings of impending danger.

At Newark-upon-Trent, a custom we are informed was wont to be observed, and possibly is still retained, of distributing penny loaves to the poor on the 11th of March in each year, when a sermon on Providence was preached by the vicar in the parish church. The origin of this practice was as follows:—During the wars between king Charles and his parliament, the town of Newark was bombarded by the troops of the latter body. In the course of the siege, an alderman of the name of Clay



dreamed for several nights in succession that his house was burned down. He at length resolved upon removing his family from it. Scarcely had he done so, when at dead of night it took fire, and burned with such fury that if his family had still inhabited it, they would almost inevitably have perished. In token of gratitude for this marvellous preservation, and that this signal instance of Divine guardianship might not pass out of remembrance, he bequeathed two hundred pounds, the interest of which was to be divided between the vicar and the poor of the parish, on each recurring anniversary of his escape.

The late Dr. Abercromby of Edinburgh, whose piety, medical skill, and philosophical acumen secured for him a deservedly high reputation, details a dream which was attended with results no less remarkable than those just mentioned. "A clergyman," he says, "had come to the Scottish metropolis from a short distance in the country, and was sleeping at an inn, when he dreamed that he saw a fire, and one of his children in the midst of it. He awoke with the impression, and instantly left town to return home. When he arrived within sight of his house, he found it on fire, and got there

in time to assist in saving one of his children, who, in the alarm and confusion, had been left in a situation of danger."

The following anecdote, he adds, "I am enabled to give as *entirely authentic* :—A lady dreamed that an aged female relative had been murdered by a black servant; and the dream occurred more than once. She was then so impressed by it, that she went to the house of the lady to whom it related, and prevailed upon a gentleman to watch in an adjoining room during the following night. About three in the morning, the gentleman hearing footsteps on the stair left his place of concealment, and met the servant carrying up a quantity of coals. Being questioned as to where he was going, he replied, in a hurried and confused manner, that he was about to mend his mistress's fire, which at that hour, in the middle of the summer, was evidently impossible; and on further investigation, a strong knife was found concealed beneath the coals."

In our first chapter we have mentioned the remarkable manner in which, through a dream, Mr. Tyerman's life was preserved, and devoted to missionary duties. Another example of an equally striking character is recorded in the

life of Mr. Kirchener, who laboured as an evangelist in Africa. Upon one occasion he was visited at his station in Caffraria by a man of bad character, but who affected deep religious concern, and by that means induced Mr. Kirchener to allow him to remain for the night, that they might converse together in the morning. They retired to rest, but after sleeping some time, the missionary started up with a loud cry. He had been awoken by a frightful dream, and found his visitor standing by his bed-side with an uplifted knife in his hand, and on the point of murdering him. The man, startled by the sudden awakening of his intended victim, drew back and slunk away. He afterwards confessed that his design was to murder his unsuspecting host, and then ransack the premises.

Though the incident which follows refers to a deliverance from a danger of a different character from those just referred to, yet it illustrates in a remarkable manner the truth now under review, and bears upon itself the stamp of genuineness.

Thomas Hownham lived in a lonely house or hut upon Barmour Moor, about two miles from Doddington in Northumberland. He was

a very poor man, and had no means to support a wife and two children except the scanty earnings obtained by keeping an ass to carry coals from Barmour coal-mill to Doddington and Wooler; or by making brooms of heath, and selling them about the country. But he was one of those poor who are "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love him." He was a man of prayer. "My parents"—says the relater of the circumstances about to be detailed \*—"lived at a village about a mile and a half from his hut. I had frequent interviews with Hownham, and on one occasion he was very anxious to know whether my father or mother had sent him any relief on the night before. I answered him in the negative as far as I knew, at which he seemed to be uneasy. I then pressed to know what relief he had found, and how? Hownham then (after requesting secrecy, unless I should hear of it from some other quarter) related the following remarkable particulars:—He had been disappointed of receiving some money he had expected for coals on the day before, and on

\* They will be found quoted at length from the Cottage Magazine in the Church of England Magazine, vol. i. p. 268.

returning home, to his pain and distress, found there was neither bread, nor meal, nor any article of food in the house. His wife was weeping sorely for the poor children, who were crying with hunger, and continued to do so till they fell asleep. He advised his wife to go to bed likewise; and she, worn out with suffering and anxiety for the children, speedily fell asleep.

“The moon shone brightly, and with a heavy heart he went out to a retired spot at a little distance, to meditate on those remarkable words in Hab. iii. 17, 18 : ‘Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.’ Here he continued in prayer for about an hour and a half; and so completely was his soul tranquilized by communion with God, that he returned into his house in a sweet and composed frame of mind.

“His wife and children he found on reaching it were still sleeping; but to his astonishment he discerned something by the light of the

moon placed upon a stool (chairs they had none) near the bed, which was not there when he left. He examined it a little more closely, and to his utter surprise found it consisted of a roasted joint of meat and a half-peck loaf. He went to the door, but could see no one; he called, but there was no answer; and after having used his eyes and his voice for some time in vain, he returned in, awoke his wife and children, asked a blessing, and gave them a comfortable repast."

Whence came this unexpected provision in such an emergency? Certainly it was sent by Him who heareth the young ravens when they cry, and who hath said that "there is no want to them that fear him." But through what instrumentality did it arrive? What Christian hand had been stretched out to relieve this poor family? What Christian mind could possibly be acquainted with their circumstances at that hour? "Truth is stranger than fiction." No such heart pitied, no such hand relieved; and yet there was the supply when the exigency came. The whole matter was involved in mystery, and in mystery it remained for above twelve years after this period.

At the expiration of that time, some friends

met together one evening, when a conversation arose about a farmer who was lately dead, and who had lived at Lowick-Highsteed; a place to which the cognomen of Pinch-me-near had been given by his neighbours, on account of its owner's miserly propensities. "What," it was asked, "had become of his property?" "Never," observed one of the number, "did he do one generous action during his whole lifetime." "Yes," answered an elderly woman who was present, "I could relate one which he did, that is rather curious." She then stated, that about twelve or thirteen years ago she lived with him as servant, or house-keeper. On one Thursday morning he ordered her to have a whole joint of meat roasted, having given directions a day or two before to bake two large loaves of white bread. He then went to Woolmer market, came home in a very bad humour, and went to bed. In about two hours after he called up his man-servant, and ordered him to take one of the loaves and the joint of meat, and carry them down the moors directly to Thomas Hownham's, and leave them there. The man did so, and finding the family asleep, set them by the bed-side and came away.

On the next morning, her master seemed, she added, in great agitation of mind, and told her and the man servant that he had intended to have invited John Mool and some neighbouring farmers, who were always teasing him on account of his close and miserly habits, to have a supper with him the night before ; that he would not invite them in the market-place, as he intended to have taken them by surprise on his way home, but a smart shower of rain coming on, they rode off, and left him before he could get an opportunity of asking them ;—that soon after he had gone to bed he fell dreaming, and thought he saw Hownham's wife and children starving for hunger ;—that he awoke and put off the impression ; soon, however, he dreamed the same thing again, and again attempted to shake it off ; but when the dream occurred a third time he was altogether overcome with the nonsense ;—that he believed the devil was in him ; but that since he had been so foolish as to send the meat and bread, he could not now help it. But he charged the man and herself never to mention it, or he would turn them away directly. She added that since he was now dead, she thought she might relate it, as a proof that he had done one generous



action, though he was grieved at it afterwards. "Surely," adds the narrator of the anecdote, "this was a wonderful instance of God's special interposition on behalf of his own children. The infidel or sceptic may sneer at the account as incredible, and denounce it as a fiction got up by some fanatic or enthusiast, and the worldly minded and formal professor of Christianity may join the former in his ridicule, and say this is carrying the doctrine of a particular providence rather too far; but the sincere Christian will be prompted by this affecting story to a higher and holier admiration of that gracious God and Father, who feedeth the young ravens when they call upon him, and therefore can give bread to his people, and supply their temporal wants in a way that shall call forth their deepest gratitude."

As we have already observed, we offer no remarks as to the origin of dreams. We have simply dealt with the fact that they have evidently at times been used by God as instruments of his providential dispensations. In the immense majority of cases, dreams are vain and fantastic fancies, originating in the previous action of the mind, or in the present condition of the body. They are but

“Children of an idle brain,  
Begot of nothing but vain fantasy,  
Which is as thin of substance as the air,  
And more inconstant than the wind, who woos  
Even now the frozen bosom of the north,  
And, being angered, puffs away from thence  
Turning his face to the dew-dropping south.”

We can hardly, therefore, think so ill of the intelligence of our readers, as to suppose that they will attach serious importance to the wild and fantastic wanderings of the thoughts in sleep, or that they will allow their dreaming fancies seriously to influence their waking conduct. Yet we have seen, on unquestionable evidence, that dreams have sometimes a premonitory and providential character.\*

\* It would be difficult perhaps to state more clearly the rules which prudence and piety alike dictate in this matter than has been done by Mr. Sheppard, in his “Essay on Dreams.”

“One would say generally—Be very slow in permitting any dream to prompt or guide your *conduct*. And yet we cannot contend that this rule admits of *no* exception. For a dream may be so striking and monitory, by its peculiar distinctness, and still more by its reiteration; and the act or precaution it prompts may be of so lawful and blameless a character, as to make the adoption of it more than justifiable. We cannot censure the lady at Edinburgh, who procured a friendly sentinel for her aged relative; and we commend the clergyman who hastened home in the night to save his children from flames.

“But we should of course say most decidedly—Wherever the dream counsels or enjoins what is contrary to the supreme rule of Scripture, or what is at variance with sound reason and prudence, or favours the dictates of passion or fancy, discard it utterly as a vain and dangerous illusion. Indeed

We now proceed to adduce a few out of the numerous well-attested instances in which peril has been warded off by some remarkable impression on the mind, giving a presentiment of danger.

This subject, like the phenomenon of dreams, is invested, when viewed as a metaphysical question, with many difficulties. Nothing ap-

there is all reason to conclude, that the dreams of some ardent minds were first prompted and created by the ruling passion, and then stirred and impelled that passion itself into strenuous and confident action. Such, perhaps, were the dreams of Hannibal, prompting him to invade Italy, and of Timur urging him on in his career of devastating war. These men, both when awake and in their slumbers, were under the influence of a restless ambition; it produced their visions, and then seized on them to stimulate and justify its own acts.

"Thus examples give great weight to the general rule, that it is, usually, most unsafe and unwarrantable to act on such suggestions. When dreams are so extraordinary, and so linked with ensuing events as to be distinguished from the throng of those which are "vanities," they are mainly to be regarded in the light of corroborative enforcements to the great doctrine of God's overruling providence and the dictates of his word. Like miracles and prophecies, such dreams are primarily meant to induce that livelier persuasion of the Divine government, which gives increased force to all the monitions of conscience and of Scripture. If there be a sequence of events whose undeniable accordance with your dream compels you to assign to it a predictive or premonitory character,—then take, thoughtfully and thankfully, the privilege of this added confirmatory indication that a hidden but omniscient Power governs our faculties and the events around us; suggests ideas and imagery to the mind; foresees and guides in wisdom the intricate and countless diversities of human affairs."

pears at first sight more irregular or less subject to law than the human thoughts, rising as they do apparently at random, and following often a discursive course. Yet undoubtedly thought is subject to laws as perfect as those which govern any other portion of the Creator's kingdom. What we call sudden thoughts and impressions may therefore often proceed from some mental associations, the links of which we do not at the instant perceive. But, as in the case of dreams, whether we give to such thoughts a natural or supernatural origin, they are unquestionably at times employed by God to work out a providential design, and have been frequently in his hands the means of deliverance from danger.

Among the many remarkable escapes of John Knox, the Scottish reformer, from death, one occurred in the following manner. It was his habit to occupy a chair at the head of the table at supper, whilst his family and guests sat down the sides. A window which opened into the street was just behind the accustomed seat. One night Knox refused to sit there himself, nor would he allow any one else to do so. For this singular deviation from his ordinary custom he could assign no particular

reason, but so he would have it ; the chair which was placed there for him as usual, was, however, allowed to remain. As they were at supper, a bullet came through the window, grazed the top of the chair, and pierced the candlestick which stood before it. If he had followed his almost invariable custom, and occupied the place at which the assassin aimed, the ball must have passed through his head.

Stilling relates the following very curious fact, as having happened to Böhm, professor of mathematics at Marburg, who being one evening in company, was seized with a sudden, irresistible persuasion that he ought to go home. As, however, he was spending the evening very pleasantly with some friends, and had nothing to do at home, he resisted the impression ; but it returned with such force that at length he was obliged to act upon it. On reaching his house he found everything as he had left it ; but he now felt a strong desire to remove his bed from the place where it ordinarily stood to the other side of the room. As this new impulse seemed more vain and absurd than the former, he resisted this also, but at length yielded to it likewise. Summoning the maid, they together removed the bed,

and then the professor returned to join his friends for the remainder of the evening. The party broke up and Böhm retired to rest. In the middle of the night he was awakened by a loud crash ; starting up in bed, he saw that a large beam had fallen, bringing part of the ceiling with it, on the exact spot where he would have been lying, but for the impulse of the previous evening.

Credulous and superstitious as Stilling may have been, no one will question his veracity ; and the foregoing narrative is so circumstantially given, and with so much precision of detail, that we can hardly reject it without at the same time denying the truthfulness of the narrator. The improbability of the incident is greatly diminished by a somewhat similar case, for the authenticity of which the writer can vouch.

Towards the close of the last century, in Birmingham, during a very heavy gale of wind, a large stack of chimneys fell, carrying with them the side of a house. On a narrow slip of flooring, in a corner of one of the demolished rooms, stood a young girl, a servant in the family, who stated that a mysterious and inexplicable impulse had led her to fly there the

instant before the chimneys fell. The girl bore a consistent Christian character, and afterwards made an affidavit to the truth of the statement before the high bailiff of the town.

Mr. Wilberforce, in his diary, records with deep thankfulness an escape from drowning which occurred to himself under the following circumstances. During one of his trips to the country he was reading on the banks of a river, having drawn his chair close to its margin, and being seated with his back to the stream. Suddenly, and without any reason that he was conscious of at the time, he removed his chair to a distance from the bank ; scarcely had he done so, when his seat broke beneath him and he fell to the ground. Had the accident occurred when he was in his former position, he must have fallen on his back into the river and been drowned, as he was unable to swim.

Of a similar character was an incident which befel a relative of the writer's, when a little child. He was entering a room with his nurse, when the latter suddenly put out her hand and drew him back ; at that instant a large and heavy chest of drawers fell, with a loud crash, on to the very spot where he stood but the moment before, and where he would still have

been standing had he not been drawn away. The nurse declared that she could not assign any reason for what she did, or give any account of it whatever. The chest of drawers too had stood there for years, nor was any danger apprehended from them.

A striking case of providential presentiment is recorded in the seventy-first number of the periodical accounts of the Moravian missions for November 4, 1810. Johanna Julius had laid her child down to sleep, and gone to work in the garden. When she had been there some time, it suddenly came into her mind that the child was in danger. The impression became so strong that she at length left her work and went to see, when to her horror she found a huge and deadly puff-adder so coiled round the sleeping child, that on its first moving the reptile would have stung it to death. The venomous creature was killed by the women who followed her, and the infant escaped the danger.

Equally, if not more striking, however, is the following well-authenticated anecdote of the late sir Evan Nepean, which carries the mind back to the sleepless night of Ahasuerus, in the palace of Shushan. Sir Evan, when under-



secretary of state, related to a friend of his, that one night after retiring to rest he experienced an unaccountable degree of wakefulness. He was in perfect health, had dined early and moderately, had nothing to brood over, and was perfectly self-possessed. Still he could not sleep, and from eleven till two in the morning never closed an eye. It was summer, twilight was far advanced; and, to dissipate the *ennui* of his wakefulness, he resolved to rise and breathe the morning air in the park. There he saw nothing but sleepy sentinels, whom he rather envied. He passed the home-office several times, and at last, without any particular object, resolved to let himself in with his pass-key. The book of entries of the day before lay open on the table, and in sheer listlessness he began to read. The first thing appalled him—"A reprieve to be sent to York for the coiners ordered for execution the next day." It struck him that he had had no return to his order to send the reprieve; and he searched the minutes, but could not find it. In alarm he went to the house of the chief clerk, who lived in Downing-street, knocked him up (it was then long past three,) and asked him if he knew anything of the reprieve being sent. In greater

alarm, the chief clerk could not remember. "You are scarcely awake," said sir Evan; "collect yourself; it must have been sent."

The chief clerk said he did now recollect; he had sent it to the clerk of the crown, whose business it was to forward it.

"Good!" said sir Evan; "but have you his receipt and certificate that it is gone?"

"No!"

"Then come with me to his house; we must find him, though it is so early."

It was now four, and the clerk of the crown lived in Chancery-lane. There was no hackney coach, and they almost ran. The clerk of the crown had a country house, and meaning to have a long holiday, he was at that moment stepping into his gig to go to his villa. Astonished at the visit of the under-secretary at such an hour, he was still more so at his business.

With an exclamation of horror, the clerk of the crown cried, "The reprieve is locked up in my desk!" It was brought. Sir Evan sent to the post-office for the trustiest and fleetest express, and the reprieve reached York at the moment the unhappy people were ascending the cart.

Impressions of the character now under

consideration seem on some occasions to have been the means of preserving individuals from committing the crime of suicide.

William Howitt, in his Year-Book of the Country, gives a curious narrative taken down from the lips of an octogenarian relative, a member of the Society of Friends, as having happened about fifty years ago to a member of the same religious body named Thomas Waring, a staymaker by trade. Led by a strong impression providentially made on his mind, he visited the town of Ross, and by a singular train of circumstances was the means of saving the life of a young woman who was on the point of committing self-destruction.

Startling as such a circumstance appears, yet a coincidence exists between it and one of a similar character related by Flavel, in his treatise on Divine Providence. He states in that work that his friend and brother minister, Mr. Dod, was in his study late one night, when he found himself strangely impelled to visit a gentleman living in the neighbourhood. The hour was most unseasonable, but the impulse was so strong that he at length determined to yield to it. At the door he met the gentleman, accosted him, and they returned into the

house together. It proved that he was at that moment on his way to destroy himself, and that he had the halter in his pocket. Other contemporary writers mention this circumstance, but the testimony of Flavel alone is sufficient to authenticate it.

The caution which we have given on the subject of dreams, is equally applicable to that of impressions on the mind of the character now referred to.

The incidents given above must, therefore, be received as providential and comparatively rare exceptions to a general rule. *To act upon every floating impression would be fanatical and unscriptural, and a sober and enlightened judgment must be our guide in all ordinary cases.* The following anecdote from the lips of Buxton is therefore useful, as showing an impression made upon the mind in connexion with prayer and the rational use of means.

“On Saturday last,” he writes, “in consequence of an almost obsolete promise to sleep in town when all the other partners were absent, I slept at Brick-lane. S. Hoare had complained to me that several of our men were employed on the Sunday. To inquire into this I went in the morning into the brewing-house,

and was led to the examination of a vat containing one hundred and seventy tons' weight of beer. I found it in what I considered a dangerous situation, and I intended to have it repaired next morning. I did not anticipate any immediate danger, as it had stood so long. When I got to Wheeler-street chapel, I did as I usually do in cases of difficulty. I craved the direction of my heavenly Friend, who will give rest to the burdened, and instruction to the ignorant.

*"From that moment I became very uneasy,* and instead of proceeding to Hampstead, as I intended, I returned to Brick-lane. On examination I saw, or thought I saw, a further declension of the iron pillars which supported this immense weight; so I sent for a surveyor, but before he came I became apprehensive of immediate danger, and ordered the beer to be let out. When he arrived, he gave it as his decided opinion that the vat was actually sinking, that it was not secure for five minutes, and that if we had not emptied it, it would have fallen." Its fall would have been very destructive to the neighbourhood, from the immense quantity of liquid which it contained.

An interesting department of our subject

opens upon us when we consider the numerous instances in which the animal creation has been made the means of conveying deliverance in times of danger.

John Craig, the distinguished and active colleague of Knox in the work of the reformation of Scotland, on one occasion owed his safety to the instrumentality of a dog. Having escaped from the grasp of the Inquisition in Italy, he found his little stock of money exhausted, and himself penniless in a strange land. To beg would almost certainly have occasioned his detection, and insured his being again taken prisoner. Concealed in the outskirts of a forest, and pondering over his forlorn condition, he was startled by seeing a large dog approach. Fearful lest it should attack him, or lead to his detection, he tried to drive it away, but in vain. He then saw that it held something in its mouth. He took it, and found it to be a purse of money, which the dog had apparently picked up. His wants were thus supplied for the present, and so carefully did he husband the resources so unexpectedly put into his hand, that he was enabled by their means to reach his native country in safety.

Among the escapes from imminent peril after

the atrocious massacre of St. Bartholomew, perhaps none was more remarkable than that of Merlin, chaplain to Coligny. When all hope of resistance or escape for himself was over, the admiral urged his friends to save themselves by flight, if they could, whilst he remained, and calmly met the death which appeared inevitable. Many of them acted upon their leader's urgent entreaty, and getting out by a trap-door, endeavoured to make their escape along the roofs of the adjoining houses. All of them, however, were shot down by the bloodthirsty assassins in the streets, except Merlin. The roof of one of the houses gave way beneath him, and he fell through into a garret, which was used as a lumber-room and hayloft. But here he only seemed to have escaped death in one form, to meet it in another. If he left his place of concealment, he would fall into the hands of murderers ; if he remained, he must be starved to death. But He who had led him into this unexpected place of refuge, was the same God who had fed the fugitive prophet by means of the ravens. Scarcely had Merlin begun to feel the pangs of hunger, before a hen entered through a hole in the roof, laid an egg and departed ; this continued day by day until the

danger had gone by, and the pastor dared to show himself. He was of course much emaciated by the smallness of his supply of food; but without it he must have perished.\*

In later periods we meet with equally remarkable instances of escape through the intervention of the animal creation. During the American war of independence, one of the contending armies arrived at a Quaker settlement, and demanded food. This was supplied as far as the ability of the settlers went, for though conscientiously abstaining from all interference in the war, they felt that it could not be a violation of their principles to feed a company of starving men. The next day the opposing army came up in pursuit, and partly because they were in want of provision, partly out of revenge for the assistance afforded their adversaries, they stripped the settlers of every kind of edible that yet remained. So great was the destitution to which they were thus reduced, that absolute famine was before them. The forests around were in possession of the soldiers, who either killed or drove away the

\* It is stated that Merlin escaped by a spider having woven its web over the place of his concealment. This, however, seems to rest on insufficient evidence.



game which might otherwise have supplied them with food. There was no resource left them but faith and prayer. They therefore earnestly committed themselves to the care, and besought the kind intervention of their heavenly Father. For some time he tried their faith, and seemed, by delaying his answer, not to hear their prayers. After several days of distress and solicitude, they retired to rest one night without any prospect of speedy deliverance. The next morning they arose, and found immense herds of wild deer surrounding their enclosures, as though driven in for their especial benefit. How they came there none could tell. It was conjectured, that either the severity of the season had compelled them to seek the cultivated districts, and that hunger had made them fearless of the presence of man ; or else that, terrified by the incessant skirmishing of the troops who were manœuvring in the neighbourhood, they had sought out this quiet valley as a retreat from the cannonade. But whatever was the cause which drove them there, they supplied the starving settlers with food sufficient for their need ; and the parties delivered recognised, with adoring gratitude, the

hand of Him who has said, "All the beasts of the forest are mine."

Jeremy Taylor has somewhere said, that "a fly with God's message could choke a king;" and a little insignificant beetle is known to have saved the life of a distinguished French naturalist.\* During the ferment of the great French Revolution, Latreille, for that was the naturalist's name, had been thrown into prison, and afterwards conveyed to one of the great general dépôts at the city of Bordeaux. The physician of the prison was one day struck by the attentive manner in which one of the captives was contemplating some object on the wall, and asked what it was that so engaged his notice. Latreille, for it was he, replied, "It is a very rare insect." The physician had a young friend in Bordeaux who was fond of the study of insects, and who was forming at the time a collection. Knowing that this individual would highly prize a rare specimen, he asked for the insect, and obtained it. The physician's friend desired to see the imprisoned entomologist, and became interested in his

\* This incident is extracted from an interesting volume, entitled, "Gleanings of Sacred Philosophy," published by Thomas Nelson.

favour. He was delighted to meet with one who had written on his favourite subject, and, assisted by others, he prevailed on the authorities of his native city to release Latreille.

He was accordingly liberated. Shortly after, his fellow-captives were shipped as convicts for Cayenne, but the ship which contained them foundered in the Bay of Biscay, *and every one on board perished*. How obscure the means God frequently employs, and, to us short-sighted mortals, how often apparently insignificant are the instruments he uses, to work his wondrously incomprehensible will! This beetle did as truly, under God, save the life of Latreille, as did the ark of Noah the remnant of the world, or as does the raft or mast the shipwrecked mariner. Latreille never forgot his little insect deliverer. When he was an old man, and had his pupils around him, no mark of his favour was so appreciated by them as a specimen of this blue, red-shouldered beetle bestowed on them as a gift from him. After Latreille's release, his favourite study of entomology was most assiduously pursued, and that well-directed industry which God so frequently rewards, did in time give him a name and a distinguished place among scientific men. In

1806 and 1807, he published an admirable work on the characters of insects, which speedily raised him to the foremost ranks of natural historians; and it is in this work, entitled, "*Genera Crustaceorum et Insectorum*," that his little deliverer is first mentioned. Under the genus *necrobia*, he gives as an illustration the species called *necrobia ruficollis*, and at the end of its descriptive marks adds, "an insect very dear to me, for in those disastrous times when France groaned tremulously under the weight of endless calamities, by the kind intervention of Bory de St. Vincent and D'Argeles, but principally the latter, this little animal was the miraculous cause of my liberty and safety."

We have already referred to the marvellous escape which Mr. Gobat experienced in the den of a hyæna, but on another occasion in his eventful career, this animal was made the providential instrument of his deliverance from a violent death. While labouring among the wild tribes of the Druses, a messenger from one of their chiefs, whose influence it was important to secure, sent a message entreating Mr. Gobat to visit him. The latter, however, was unable to do so, in consequence of his labouring at the

time under indisposition. A second messenger repeated the invitation, but still, contrary to Mr. Gobat's expectation, circumstances arose to prevent him complying with the chief's wishes. A third messenger, however, at last prevailed on him to set out, by the assurance that if he went at once he might spend the night with the chief, and be ready to return in the morning, so as to join a ship about to sail for Malta, and in which Mr. Gobat was anxious to embark. On their journey, the guides lost themselves in the dark and lonely mountain paths which led to the chief's dwelling. Having at last, with some difficulty, regained their route, they suddenly saw by the light of the moon, for night had come on, that a *hyæna* had laid itself down across the path exactly in their way. The natives took up some stones and threw them at it, in order to frighten it. The animal sprang up and ran straight along the path over which the party was to travel. This apparently accidental circumstance decided them. A superstition is prevalent among the Druses, that "the way a hyæna goes is an unlucky one." The natives refused, accordingly, to go further, and Mr. Gobat was obliged to retrace his steps in order to embark for Malta,

greatly perplexed in his own mind at the obstacles which had hindered him from accomplishing a journey apparently of so much consequence to his mission. In time, however, it was evident that a gracious Hand had planned these interruptions, and that the hyæna had been a providential messenger. When in Malta, Mr. Gobat received a letter from a friend in Lebanon, stating that he had been visited by the chief, who, with much agitation, had spoken to him as follows:—"Your friend is truly a servant of God, and God has preserved him: for I wished to draw him to my village in order to murder him. Therefore I sent message after message to him; but God has delivered him from the hand of his enemies." In perusing such a narrative, who can avoid exclaiming, "This is the finger of God!"

Such of our readers as have perused the interesting narrative of the escape of the Madagascar converts from their persecutors, may remember how that little band of faithful confessors owed their deliverance on one important occasion to the instrumentality of the animal creation. A band of soldiers was advancing to surround the house in which they were sheltered, at a time when they were quite uncon-

scious of any such danger impending. The chattering of some crows, however, attracted the attention of one of the party, and going to the door to see what occasioned the noise, he perceived the soldiers advancing, and had time to give an alarm sufficient to enable all to escape.

A singular incident is related in connexion with Mr. Colston, the merchant prince of Bristol, whose name still "smells sweet and blossoms from the dust," in consequence of the munificent character of his charities. One of his vessels, on her return voyage, struck upon a rock, and so large was the leak that all efforts to save it from foundering seemed ineffectual. Suddenly the water ceased to pour in, and by dint of constant pumping the ship was brought safe to port. When the cargo had been discharged, she was overhauled for repairs, when, to the astonishment of all, a dolphin was found firmly wedged in the leak. As a memorial of this singular event, the figure of a dolphin was carved on the staves which are, or were wont to be, carried in annual procession through the streets of Bristol, in commemoration of Mr. Colston's generous philanthropy.

Dr. Calamy, in his "Life and Times," records

the preservation in a similar manner of a ship and crew, commanded by captain Stephens, "who resided at Harwich, and was a man of good reputation." Dr. Calamy, in attestation of the truth of the statement, asserts that the fish was preserved in spirits, and might be seen at the time he wrote.

Closely resembling, also, both of the above incidents is the following curious instance of preservation from danger. The Bermudas consist of a multiplicity of islands of various sizes, many of them so small as only to contain and provide food for two or three families. It was usual for the missionaries who laboured in that quarter of the world to cruise at stated intervals from one to another of these islets, visiting the few individuals upon them in succession. A few years ago, the rev. H. Capern was, in this manner, making a tour among the islanders under his pastoral care, when the small vessel in which he usually sailed sprang a leak, and the water poured in so rapidly, that all their attempts to keep it down by pumping and baling were fruitless. The nearest land was some miles distant, and it seemed impossible to keep the sloop afloat till they could reach it. Unexpectedly, how-



ever, they found that the leak had abated, and that they were rapidly lessening the quantity of water in the hold. The hope of escape inspired them with new energy, and by dint of great exertions they were able to reach the shore. Having drawn the boat up on to the beach, they proceeded to examine her keel, that they might discover what had stopped the leak. To their surprise they found a mass of tangled seaweed, so large as to fill up the hole, and so matted together as effectually to keep out the water.

This deliverance may be considered a parallel to one which occurred to captain Cook in his interesting voyages of discovery. While navigating an unknown ocean, the ship suddenly grounded upon a reef of rocks, and began fast to fill. Alarm filled even the minds of the bravest, and so near did the whole of the party appear to the eternal world, that the most careless and profane were awed by the appalling character of the danger. For some time the water gained upon them, but at last the vessel floated off the reef, and the crew having made some hasty attempts to repair the damage, the ship proceeded on her voyage. On gaining a safe port, an examination of the ship's bottom

was made, when, to the astonishment of all, it was found that the leak had been stopped up in a great measure by a fragment of rock, which had broken off the reef, and served to keep the water from rushing in. With this slight obstruction between them and death they had been sailing for some days. The sensation of the rescued crew on making this discovery may be imagined. The hand of God will be seen in this deliverance more clearly when we remember that by means of captain Cook were discovered the South Sea Islands, where afterwards missionary enterprise raised so many trophies of the Redeemer's grace.

In a former chapter we have seen how surely the prayer of faith was answered, and how deliverance has been extended to those who have cried to God in the hour of extremity. The instances now given will, we trust, have confirmed the same truth, and at the same time will have shown how manifold are the resources which Omnipotence can employ to work out its providential purposes.

## CHAPTER IV.

## CONCLUSION.

THE following results may be deduced from the foregoing narratives :—

1st. *There is no condition of life exempt from danger.* Perils encompass us wherever we go. Death lurks in ambush along the whole path of life, and may spring upon us at any moment. A very large proportion of the imminent perils recorded in the previous pages were encountered by persons engaged in peaceful occupations. They imagined themselves secure from present or immediate danger, when suddenly they found themselves face to face with the king of terrors. Sudden death may smite us down when in fancied safety, as well as when in acknowledged jeopardy. No age, no position, is exempt, and no precaution can ward off the stroke. The thunderbolt smites at one blow and involves in one ruin the gnarled giant oak, and the floweret which nestled in obscurity at its foot. The “rich man” felt himself secure

when he laid his plans of affluent ease "for many years;" but the awful mandate went forth, "Thou fool, *this night* shall thy soul be required of thee."

2nd. *There is a special Providence watching over us.* The facts adduced suggest, and furnish material for, two lines of argument in proof of this assertion.

First, the multiplicity and variety of the deliverances recorded. If there had been only one or two instances of signal and remarkable escapes from imminent peril on record, it might have been thought easy to have explained them away as being merely casual and fortuitous conjunctions of circumstances. But if any person should, therefore, go on to apply the same explanation to each case in the series, and to ignore them all as mere accidents, he would be guilty of a most egregious fallacy. Each additional case adds something to the improbability of such an explanation, till at length the probabilities against it become all but infinite.

Secondly, many of the deliverances indicate an obvious purpose. They are evidently connected with antecedent acts of faith and prayer, or they result in the dedication of the

life which was preserved to Him who was believed to have preserved it. They thus form parts of the great scheme of moral government, attesting the continued agency of the Most High, and supplying motives to, or rewards of his service. Just as we infer the existence of a Creator from the marks of design in creation, may we infer the fact of an overruling Providence from similar marks of design in the course of human events.

3. *The mode in which providential interpositions are effected is illustrated.* Not by miraculous subvention, not by a subversion of the laws of nature, not by a dissolution of the connexion between cause and effect; but by the control and superintendence of natural agencies and general laws, adapting them to special emergencies and individual cases. The opponents of the doctrine of Providence have generally misconceived or misrepresented this fact. Thus Pope writes:—

“Think we, like some weak prince, the Eternal Cause  
Prone for his favourites to reverse his laws?  
Shall burning Etna, if a sage requires,  
Forget to thunder, or recall his fires?  
When the loose mountain trembles from on high,  
Shall gravitation cease if you go by?”

We do not think the Eternal to be “altogether such an one as ourselves,” and do not expect

him to reverse his laws for our sakes. If the saint or the sage recklessly violates the laws of nature, or rather, the laws of God in nature, the insulted laws will avenge themselves in his destruction. Even the Eternal Son would not tempt the Lord by casting himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. Nevertheless, the ancient promise stands good—"He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." That is to say, we may expect protection in the path of duty. If, in obedience to the will of God, we have to encounter imminent perils, we may hope for signal and providential deliverances; "and that not through the powers of nature disobeying their own laws, but through other powers in nature opportunely interposing to stop, to turn aside, or otherwise to modify their operation. The volcano may burst, the tempest may rage, and the cliff may fall, an instant before or an instant after the time when these events might have been followed by fatal consequences; or some passing impulse of feeling may have hurried the individual away; or some other power of nature may have hastened to shelter or defend him—and all by a special arrangement intended by God from the very beginning." It is, then, either ignorance or perverse mis-

representation on the part of the deniers of Providence to charge those who believe it with expecting continued miracles. The distinction between the two is broad and clear. The age of miracles is past—the age of Providence continues. “This is, in fact,” says Isaac Taylor, “the great miracle of Providence—that no miracles are needed to accomplish its purposes.”

4. *We learn how minute and universal are the care and providence of God.* Our illustrations have been drawn, not exclusively from among the great and noble, but also from the humble and obscure. “The poor and needy, and he that hath no helper” save God, have experienced that as nothing is too vast for his power, so nothing is too insignificant for his notice. “The Lord is good to *all*, and his tender mercies are over *all* his works.” To his omniscience the individual is not lost sight of in the multitude, or the unit forgotten in the aggregate; but he cares for all, by caring for each. So that the cases of special and particular providence adduced, furnish not exceptions to, but examples of, the general rule. We have thus an emphatic confirmation and exposition of our Lord’s words, that “not one sparrow shall fall on the ground without our Father,” and that “the very hairs of our head are all numbered.”

In the course of this volume we have had to consider perils of a widely varied character ; but we may be permitted to remind the reader, that there is one yet more imminent than any we have enumerated—one to which all are by nature exposed—the loss of the immortal soul. No calamity could be so awful as this, for it is final, fatal, and irretrievable. Taught, then, by the lessons of life's uncertainty which have been passing under review, may we hasten while it is yet time to the refuge set before us in the gospel ; repent of sin ; believe in the Saviour ; and, renewed by his Holy Spirit, approve ourselves his faithful followers by a life of devout obedience. “ God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Be it ours to welcome these tidings with cordial faith, as worthy of all acceptation ; and constrained by a sense of the mercies of God, no longer to live to ourselves, but to the glory of Him who hath “ delivered us from so great a death.”







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